

HISTORICAL DREADNOUGHTS

ARTHUR MARDER,
STEPHEN ROSKILL

AND

Battles for
Naval History



BARRY GOUGH

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*Arthur Marder, Stephen Roskill and
Battles for Naval History*

Barry Gough

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Captain Stephen Roskill, RN, Life Fellow of Churchill College, Cambridge. By Michael Noakes. Portrait from the Roskill Library. *By courtesy of the artist and the Master, Fellows and Scholars of Churchill College*

The English admirals are not those who built up the power of their country. If England has had Rodney, Hawke and Nelson, we have had Duquesne, Tourville and Suffren. It is that impersonal being that is called the English Admiralty; it is that which has prepared all the elements of British greatness; it is that which has known how to create homogeneous fleets, to arm them, equip them, enlist crews for them (God knows at the price of what sacrifices), and to place at their head the most capable men. Its severity has often been excessive; but, with admirals for its support.

Commander René Davelny,
The Genius of Naval Warfare (1909).

Preface

IN the course of modern history, Britain's Royal Navy has been a powerful instrument with an illustrious reputation. As an arbiter in world affairs, a guardian of seaborne trade, and a shield for the British Isles and the British Empire, the Navy – the Senior Service of Britain's Armed Forces – played a prominent role in the history of the world from the sixteenth century on, from the years of Queen Elizabeth I to the present. However, in the seven decades beginning with 1880, it faced its severest trials and tribulations. Britain's paramount position was then beset by forces largely beyond the control of the nation and empire. New foreign rivals appeared on the world stage with aggressive intent. Two great wars were to prove the supreme test of the fleet and the nation.

Two remarkable historians of great stature took up the task of writing the history of the Royal Navy in these turbulent and trying years. They did so at a time when few if any serious historical studies had been undertaken of the modern Navy. This book is their story.

The present work began as one thing – a biography of Professor Arthur Marder – and ended up as something quite different, both in scope and in design: a sort of double life, as it were, of Marder and of his famous sparring partner, Captain Stephen Roskill, Royal Navy. As the course of my research made clear, Marder and Roskill were then, as they are now here in the telling and retelling, as different in personality and character as could be imagined. Beyond this, their abiding quest for pre-eminence in the field, and the grave animosity that developed between them following an initial quarrel – over the use of the diaries of 'the man of secrets', Lord Hankey – made for a historians' battle the like of which has seldom been seen and recorded (the battle between Sir Geoffrey Elton and J.H. Hexter, likewise acknowledged experts on Tudor English history, and that between Hugh Trevor-Roper and A.J.P. Taylor are two that come to mind). Marder without Roskill, or perhaps the opposite, would have been like Hamlet without the Ghost.

Marder and Roskill died within two years of one another. The first was from academia, the other from the Service. One was American, the other

English. The former, first in the field, was abundantly successful in the historical profession and academic life before the other entered the lists. Of the two, Marder was the more *analytical* and Roskill was the more *strategic* in thinking. Marder was pointillist in style, layering on well-sorted evidence and building up his case; Roskill was magisterial but had a slight tendency to get off track. Doubtless the personality, character, disposition, and health of a historian shape his ability to write on a subject. In Marder and Roskill, their unique characteristics profoundly affected their work. Each in his own way made substantial contributions to the annals of history. We are the better for the rich tapestry to which they both contributed magnificent strands.

In the end, Roskill, who was in effect an 'official historian' and an exemplary practitioner in that branch of historical inquiry, found hard to bear the encroachments, both persistent and unrelenting, of his celebrated precursor. As correspondence between them and interviews with those who knew either of them (or even both) now makes clear, a great, swelling drama was being acted out between them. Roskill engaged a large supporting cast. Marder refused to counter with such an act. This dialectic, aspects of which appeared most notably in the *Times Literary Supplement*, can now be revealed more fully from materials in their private papers, which make evident that their public spat – remembered to this day by naval historians and others – had deep, private dimensions.

At the time, some observers bemoaned the disputatious nature of the quarrel, and some have thought that history would have been better served if the two had patched up their differences. But nothing could be done to change the direction that they took, so strong-willed was each of the players. The record also shows the paucity of the argument that, had they not had this quarrel, there would have been a better sharing of historical materials. Almost to the end, the pair responded to each other's needs for evidence and exchanged documents on loan. A public war did not prohibit scholarly exchange. The fight may appear unseemly, but, in fact, it had important historical legacies: it obliged each of the contenders to do further research to find, present and demonstrate documentary support for his arguments.

From the outset, I have worked diligently to maintain an impartial view. We need, I contend, more great historians such as Marder and Roskill, to say nothing of audiences willing to read good history. Had these two persons never met and quarrelled, their legacies would be profound and enduring in any event. Their vast and vital corpus of work, detailed in the Bibliography at the end of this book, adds spice as well as true historical and personal interest to an unusual episode in the history of the modern world and of the Royal Navy in particular. Biographies of historians can make for compelling

PREFACE

reading, as John Clive's *Macaulay* and David Cannadine's *G.M. Trevelyan* make clear; and how historians pursue their calling as detectives of the past tells us much about the way in which human beings deal with that past and portray it to the present.

Neither Marder nor Roskill were known to me personally, though I was introduced to each on at least one occasion. This was in the late 1960s, when both were in their prime. I recollect Marder as impeccably, even nattily, dressed, when I had occasion to hear his August 1966 post-lunch address to the American Historical Association in Portland, Oregon. The subject was 'That Hamilton Woman: Clio and Emma Reconciled', and he spoke with the same self-assurance that was evident in his writings. I remember Roskill best from a 1968 council meeting of the Navy Records Society (NRS) at the old Public Record Office in Chancery Lane, London. His deafness seemed so restricting that it quite hindered any council dealings of the day, though he carried heavy executive responsibilities nonetheless. At the time, he was dealing with the demanding and difficult issue of getting what became known as the 'Harper Narrative' published by the Navy Records Society and fending off critics of the project, notably the 2nd Earl Beatty, son of the famous admiral.

In gathering materials for this book I have accumulated many debts. My first is to Professor Samuel Clyde McCulloch and his wife, Sally. Our friendship predates this book by decades but grew in depth in the mid-1990s when, in conversation, I enquired of Sam what papers Marder had left at University of California, Irvine (UCI, as it is commonly called), where they had been colleagues. 'Come to the university and see,' he replied, knowing as he did so that a huge, untouched treasure trove awaited me. That took me to the splendid UCI, in Orange County. Five visits later – invariably coordinated (I confess) to escape the chilliest weeks of the Canadian winter – I completed the survey of the Marder Papers, thirty-five file boxes in all. Throughout the demands of documentary research, Sam and Sally provided counsel and filled in all the details about the personalities of the great 'instant university' (the term is Sam's and he used it in his recent history of UCI).

My research was begun not too soon, for already persons who knew Marder had passed away. All the same, I was just in time to probe the memories of surviving informants. I was enriched by discussions with two of Marder's friends, John S. Galbraith, historian of the British Empire, and Henry Cord Meyer, historian of Germany and of air ships and founding chairman of the Department of History at UCI. Both have died since this work was commenced. Meyer knew Marder from wartime days in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). I also benefited from discussions with Marder's

colleagues Spencer Olin, Keith Nelson, Alan Lawson, and Richard Hufbauer, and with a teaching assistant of those times, Kenneth Hagan, the naval scholar. From Marder's PhD students at UCI, I have learned much. Gerry Jordan lent me his Marder file. John Horsfield provided encouragement. So did Mark Jacobsen. I am grateful to them for their comments on sections of the text. At UCI Libraries, Jackie M. Dooley, Steve MacLeod and Andrew Jones, of Special Collections and University Archives, guided me through the research. At the University of California, San Diego, Mandeville Special Collections, Lynda Claassen, eased my research in John S. Galbraith fonds.

In Honolulu and at the University of Hawaii, where Marder was on faculty before his move to California, I queried the lawyer who acted in the damages case of his incinerated documents, Axel Ornelles, and spoke with colleagues, students, and friends of Marder, notably George Akida, Cedric Cowing, Daniel Kwok, and John Stephan. My quest there, and at UCI as well, led me to so many near contemporaries that I felt much like an anthropologist among historians. Perhaps I should not have been surprised, but when I made my inquiries in Honolulu in 2007 personal memories of Marder's time were still vivid among those who had known him there.

Many of the great fighting seamen of the recent past made their appearance in the letters I sifted through: admirals all – Bruce Fraser, William Chalmers, Ernle Chatfield, Frederic Dreyer, William James, William Jameson, and Louis Mountbatten, to name a few. Their correspondence to Marder was rich, frank, and full – and it peppers this narrative. Marder's files led me to Captain Anthony B. Sainsbury, who in 1961 had visited Marder in California and later received him in London. Subsequent correspondence with Sainsbury led me to the second half of the project. From the late Alan Pearsall, formerly of the National Maritime Museum, who was a great help and inspiration to me, I learned that Sainsbury used to speak to Roskill like an uncle, and I know that Sainsbury also treated Marder with avuncular consideration. Thus, I owe much to Sainsbury's insistence that both historians be given their due, and I hope that at the end of the day the whole edifice balances. Certainly, that has been my intent.

In London, Greenwich, Oxford, and Cambridge, I have worked in a number of public and private collections. I am grateful to the National Maritime Museum for a Caird Fellowship that allowed me to search the Beatty, Fraser, Gretton and other papers. Lawrence Phillips has been of immeasurable help, and words cannot be found to express my deep gratitude for his guidance, especially in darkest days. Patricia Methven and the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives at King's College, London, opened the G.S. Graham files. Mrs Mary Graham provided additional correspondence

PREFACE

and reminiscences of Graham's friendship with Marder. Noble Frankland, Jock Gardner, the late John Grenville, Richard Harding, Peter Hore, Roger Knight, Andrew Lambert, Hugh Murphy, Ian Nish, the late Mary Z. Pain, Nicholas Rodger, and Roderick Suddaby are among the many who have helped. I owe to the late Admiral Sir Arthur Hezlett his personal reflections about the Bikini Atoll atomic trials.

At Churchill College, Cambridge, where Roskill was a fellow, Dr Piers Brendon and Allen Packwood, successive keepers of the Churchill Archives Centre, guided my research. Correlli Barnett, Marion Stewart, and Michael Hoskin are among others who helped. My experience researching at Churchill College differed from that in Irvine. For, whereas Marder was only a distant memory in Irvine and his huge archive there (with a rich library of naval history, including microfilms) largely unused – I was the first to have consulted them – Roskill reigns supreme at Churchill: the research room is named in his memory, his books line the walls, his documents are neatly calendared, a portrait of him is prominently displayed, an exhibition of his life has been held, and a biennial lecture is given in his honour. His reputation grows with the years. Roskill is regarded as one of the college's founding fathers. He provided the energy and commitment to build an archive of statecraft and military art. I thank the Master and Fellows of Churchill College for twice electing me an archives by-fellow.

This work could not have been completed without the aid of many others. I wish to thank especially Robin Brodhurst, David Cannadine, Andrew Cook, John Ehrman, Sir Michael Howard, Roger Louis, and Zara Steiner. For additional assistance on Marder research, I thank Robert W. Smith of the University of Oregon, Frank K. Lorenz of Hamilton College, the late 2nd Lord Chatfield of Victoria, British Columbia, Anthony Simmonds of Greenwich, England, and several of Marder's former students, including J. W. Cahill. Of special value to my work on Marder's early life were his friends or Harvard acquaintances Josephine Massell, Martha Paisner, Miriam Emden, and Helen Rutstein Baker. Suzanne Sigman and Samantha Harrington unearthed early Boston school records and Michelle Gachette brought to my attention a number of items at the Harvard University Archives. Jenny Duke, former editor at UCI, Anna Sander of Balliol College, and Alice Millea of Oxford University Press Archives provided historical gems. In addition to those mentioned, I wish to thank Dean Allard, Christopher Bell, Sadao Asada, Kenneth Cozens, Roger Dingman, Rob Davison, Nicholas d'Ombain, Jan Drent, Penney Edwards, James Goldrick, William Glover, Vice Admiral Mike Gretton, Michael Hadley, Paul G. Halpern, Kenneth Hansen, John Hattendorf, Judy Hough, Wilfred Lund, Chris Madsen, Richard Mayne, Marc

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Milner, the late Richard Ollard, the late Tom Pocock, David Ramsay, Eugene Rasor, Dean Ruffilli, Roger Sarty, Donald Schurman, Matthew Seligmann, Jon Sumida, Tim Travers, and Michael J. Whitby. Lee-Anne Stack provided photographic help.

To the families I extend my thanks, more particularly to Arthur's children Tod Marder, Toni Kaplan, and Kevin Marder, his grandson Gregory Kaplan, his sister-in-law Bobbie Marder, and still others with more distant connections, as well as Nicholas Roskill, son of Stephen, and Julian Roskill. I have benefited from their advice and counsel. Nicholas Roskill had his father's 1975 text recounting the dispute with Marder 'released' from its secrecy embargo so that I could use it here. For this generous act, and for comments on sections of the text read in draft, I am grateful. Likewise, I am thankful to him for the freedom that he has granted me in interpreting the life of his father. Wherever possible I have selected photographs from the respective family albums, and thanks are due for permission to publish them here.

To aid the reader I have provided a list of Principal Persons in alphabetical order. In the Bibliography, the books and articles of Marder and Roskill are listed in chronological order. The first portion of the book treats the parallel lives, beginning with Marder, moving on to Roskill as 'official historian', and concluding with Marder's relocation to the University of Hawaii. The second section begins with the genesis of the quarrel and moves successively through the disputatious arguments over Churchill and the admirals, much of it set out in the *Times Literary Supplement*, where the letters exchanged by the duelling historians are tribute to what editor Bernard Levin dismissed too lightly as 'academic bitchiness'. The third and final section portrays Marder and Roskill in their final years, and ends with an appraisal of their contributions to historical writing. I have not included Stephen Roskill's differences with David Irving over the disaster of the Russian Convoy PQ.17, an essentially legal matter lying outside the bounds of this work.

I thank my wife, Marilyn, for her support. To my editor, Curtis Fahey, I extend my gratitude for his aid in sharpening the arguments presented here and for much else. This work owes so much to Rob Gardiner and his team, my publishing partners in this enterprise.

In closing, I might say that I leave this subject with regret, for the literary trail has been an exciting and compelling one. I alone am responsible for any errors, whether of fact or interpretation, that remain.

BARRY GOUGH
VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Principal Persons

- The 3rd Earl Beatty:** who mistakenly grants Roskill copyright clearance to use his grandfather's papers and unwittingly creates a nightmare scenario.
- Sir Norman Brook (Lord Normanbrook):** secretary to the Cabinet Office, who mediates between Winston Churchill and Roskill in a clash of historical judgements over Roskill's *War at Sea*.
- Professor Sir James Butler:** historian and fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, who, as editor of the Official War Histories of the Second World War, steers Roskill's typescripts through the crooked corridors of power.
- Sir Winston Spencer Churchill:** statesman and historian, who haunts the margins of Roskill's 'official history' and seeks to curb his judgements, with some success.
- Sir John Cockcroft:** atomic-secrets specialist, first master of Churchill College, who welcomes Roskill to an academic fold peopled by scientists.
- Alvin Coox:** historian of Japanese military affairs, who speeds Marder's research for his last book, on the Royal Navy and the Imperial Japanese Navy.
- Captain John Creswell,** Royal Navy (retired): historian of naval tactics who proposes a book, 'Control of Sea Communications', that eventually becomes Roskill's *War at Sea*; avuncular in manner, he steps forward (though always behind the scenes) to become a main prop for Marder.
- Geoffrey Cumberlege:** publisher of Oxford University Press, who snatches Marder from the disappointed Jonathan Cape.
- John Ehrman:** noted historian and fellow 'official historian' who befriends Roskill at the Cabinet Office and in his last, agonizing days.
- Vice Admiral Sir Peter Gretton:** former escort commander and noted historian on naval matters, including Churchill and the Royal Navy; provides sympathetic aid and counsel to Marder when his texts are incinerated.

- Nina, Dowager Duchess of Hamilton:** intimate friend of the late Admiral Lord Fisher and guardian of his letters, who opens the vaults of literary gold to Marder.
- Lieutenant Commander Peter Kemp,** Royal Navy (retired): submariner, editorial staff of *The Times*, and in Naval Intelligence Division during the Second World War; later head of the Naval Historical Branch and Naval Librarian in the Ministry of Defence; high profile arch-Marderite who guides his research and vets his manuscripts.
- Sherman Kent:** Yale historian of France, who forces Marder's exit from Research & Analysis, a precursor of the CIA.
- Stephen King-Hall:** naval officer, writer, and future MP, who introduces Roskill to analytical research.
- William Langer:** dean of international historians, Marder's Harvard mentor, who takes him into Research & Analysis.
- Sir Basil Liddell Hart:** noted military historian and strategist, who engages Roskill in discussion about the trials of 'official history' and shapes Marder's thinking about the Dardanelles and about Churchill as war leader.
- Samuel Clyde McCulloch:** historian and academic administrator, who hires Marder in California on advice from fellow historian John S. Galbraith, then backs his rising star against campus turmoil.
- Arthur J. Marder:** internationally famous historian, known especially but not exclusively for his five-volume history of the Royal Navy in the First World War.
- Henry Cord Meyer:** historian and friend of Marder, who strangely foresees Marder's work on Admiral 'Jacky' Fisher and also on the Imperial Japanese Navy.
- Henry Allen Moe:** head of the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation in New York, guardian angel of academic philanthropy, who secretly proposes Marder for an Oxford professorship.
- Earl Mountbatten of Burma:** admiral of the fleet, who parries unsuccessfully Roskill's challenge regarding his powers as supreme commander, South East Asia; devoted aide to Marder.
- Richard Ollard:** judicious editor at the publisher William Collins, historian himself, and stout defender of Roskill against the trustees of the 2nd Lord Beatty, though critical of Roskill's account of his relationship with Marder.
- Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond:** historian of statesmen and sea power, who grants Marder his wish to examine his explosive, behind-the-scenes diaries.

PRINCIPAL PERSONS

Kenneth Rose: biographer, man of letters and journalist, astute bystander to personal quarrels, and newspaper commentator on the Marder-Roskill dispute.

Stephen Roskill: naval officer and historian of the Royal Navy, celebrated worldwide as the official historian of the navy in the Second World War.

Captain Anthony B. Sainsbury: historian, trustee of the *Naval Review*, judicious reviewer, who befriends Marder and Roskill in like fashion and attempts mediation between the quarrelling duo.

Sir Eric Seal: principal secretary to the first lord of the Admiralty, Churchill, who later seeks to expose the shortcomings of Roskill's work and lives long enough to alert Marder to the same.

A.J.P. Taylor: stormy petrel of British historians, broadcaster and journalist, a literary king-maker who rhapsodizes about Marder in reviews and on the BBC.

PART ONE

Historians in the Making

Chapter 1

Marder: Examining Britannia's Anatomy

LEGEND has it that an American scholar, having just arrived in England moments before, burst into the Students' Room of the British Museum Library, panting in exhaustion. He pleaded to the attendant that his order for materials be given exceptional, overwhelming priority. 'I haven't a moment to lose!' he gasped. 'I've only got four months!'¹ That scholar was Arthur Marder, and the date probably 1959, when he was writing his history of the Royal Navy from 1904 to 1919. This was a typical entry of Marder to a public research institution, and the story would have been as true for him if he were a postgraduate student or a senior scholar writing the last of his books. Speed was of the essence with Marder, to which was combined assiduousness in tracking down documents and discernment about the subject on which he was working. In due course he earned the august title, as the *Times Literary Supplement* (TLS) said, of 'founding-father of modern naval history'. On this score, Marder himself was more self-effacing. When queried on the matter by a writer from the London *Evening Standard*, he replied, 'I am America's greatest expert on Lady Hamilton. I'm even going to read a paper about her at a luncheon, proving that she is not nearly as black as she has been painted.'² Marder, true to form, might have talked flippantly about Nelson's famous love Emma but he would then turn the conversation in complete earnest to the Battle of Jutland, or some such. What always amused reporters, critics, and rivals was that Marder did his work from non-English and very American bases – Boston, Hawaii, or California. The road to the study of the Battle of Jutland in the First World War, and of many years before and after, was a long one for Marder, by no means easy. In fact, it was dictated by the whims of fate.

Sir John Keegan, the military historian, once questioned why Britain's two greatest naval historians had been American. He placed the name of Arthur Marder beside that of Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan.³ Indeed, it is a curious fact that the first great modern professional historian of the Royal Navy

should have come from Boston, a cradle of the American Revolution, and from a poor immigrant family.

Marder was singular in appearance.⁴ He was built on a powerful frame, though he was neither tall nor corpulent. The hair on his head thinned quickly towards middle age. He wore a four-o'clock shadow. He had horn-rimmed glasses, later replaced by those heavy black frames with wide arms common in the 'beat' generation. His well-spaced dark eyes gave away little emotion; in fact, he had the appearance of being extraordinarily serious and wore a frown all the time. He had a noble head, and there was something of a Roman senator in his profile, set off by a magisterial nose and firm jaw. Debonair and well turned out, he was precise and exact in appearance and form. One observer who in the mid-1970s took note of Marder's manner was struck by his similarity to Thomas Babington Macaulay, the historian, namely: he was never at a loss for words; he brooked no distractions and focused on research; he did not shy away from trenchancy in personal expression; and he had a formidable capacity for work and a dauntingly capacious memory. He was of ready wit and abundant humour. He carried an undoubted air of authenticity; self-assurance was his highest trait.⁵ Competitive in academic matters, he would state his disagreements quickly, and early in his university career he was known to have stormed out of a room in protest, only to be brought back by a junior colleague who convinced him that if he wanted to change the issue at hand he would have to return. This was a Marder tactic, of enduring memory even in his last university post.

Jacob Arthur Marder, for so he was named before he entered Harvard, when Arthur replaced Jacob as preferred first name, was born in Boston on 8 March 1910, the son of Russian Jewish immigrants from what is now Grodno, Belarus, Maxwell J. Marder and Ida (née Greenstein). Arthur was the oldest of five children; he had one brother and three sisters. In early years the family lived in west Boston near Bunker Hill but later moved to a three-storey house, 103 Ellington Street, in the respectable but low-rent borough of Dorchester. The family was hard-pressed for cash. Max Marder, who loved baseball as much as opera, was a tailor and businessman. He ran a suit and coat business with a partner, B. Horn. Max was conscious of the value of education and particularly of reading to a young person's success. Each payday he gave Arthur a book. Arthur developed a passion for history, embracing the subject at a young age with a dedication hardly to be appreciated. He became engrossed in the prospect of a career as a college teacher. Like many another first-generation American, he was devoted to personal advancement by means of hard work.

Marder grew up in a conservative and orthodox Jewish household. He attended Boston public schools and entered, in his seventh year of schooling,

the English High School, the oldest high school in the United States (founded 1821) and one known for its double capacity of excellent academic preparation and of superb technical training. Marder, in the academic stream of studies, excelled in English and history as well as Latin, French, and mathematics, taking top prizes – the Lawrence in each of English and history, and the highest prize, the Washington and Franklin medal, for overall academic excellence – and earning strong support for university entrance. His target was Harvard in nearby Cambridge, Massachusetts. Arthur Marder demonstrated an early love of learning coupled with application for high achievement. He told a Honolulu reporter, Charles Parmiter, in 1956 that at the age of thirteen he knew that he was going to teach college history. He was not only a high performer: even before entering university, he showed immense scholarly ability to organize and analyse material and showed generosity to fellow students in developing what are termed study habits. In fact, one such student, beholden to Arthur for helping her get through courses in high school, took him as her date to her graduation dance.

In the fall of 1927 Marder entered the undergraduate Harvard College without scholarship, and so if there existed a quota on the admission of Jews he came within it. Edwin O. Reischauer, the historian of Japan who was there at the same time, later wrote that Harvard was still an aristocratic and parochially New England institution, largely centred on the undergraduate college which was populated largely by 'preppies'. 'A few bright New York Jews and Middle Westerners were tolerated, but not really welcomed.'⁶ Marder was certainly not among the Boston and New England bluebloods or so-called Brahmins that made up Harvard's elite or that of its female college, Radcliffe. Rather, as a Jew of hard-pressed immigrant parents, he was an outsider, dependent on his own abilities for successful progression. There was no time for the characteristic off-hours rowdiness of the undergrads. In his case, merit had to rule, and merit could be achieved by brilliance attached to hard work. Otherwise preoccupied with work and study, he took part in no campus clubs of prominence, not even the Menorah.

The stock market crash in 1929 threatened his higher education, but Harvard provided aid from the Price Greenleaf Fund. The next year, on merit, he won the Rebecca A. Perkins scholarship. Important in his education was Harvard's Widener Library, famed repository of books, journals, and newspapers, and there, with a small carrel for his own use, Marder had the run of the rich holdings. Outside the classroom, Marder had summer and perhaps occasional Saturday employment in a confectionery, Sunday's Candies, run by an owner who was dedicated to seeing young persons of promise such as Marder get ahead. He also found employment in the US Postal Service. In

1931 he graduated BA cum laude, that is, for distinction in one subject, in his case history. He entered the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences the next term, while still living at home. The Depression kept him out of Harvard in 1932–33, but he returned for completion of an MA in history in 1934 and a PhD in the same field two years later.

Harvard was then (and arguably still is) one of the world's pre-eminent history schools, some would say the most prominent. The department was a galaxy of great historians. Seven future presidents of the American Historical Association held appointments. Dominant in the field of modern European affairs and international relations was the rising star William Leonard Langer, later Coolidge Professor of History, who was then pioneering the relationships between foreign policy and naval and military affairs in his great works *Alliances and Alignments* (1931, 2nd ed. 1950) and *Diplomacy of Imperialism* (1935, 2nd ed. 1950). Son of an immigrant family and Boston-born like Marder, Langer shared the view widespread among immigrants and their children that the United States was a land of freedom and opportunity. Formidable in appearance and well respected by colleagues and administrators, he had been in France with the US Army chemical-warfare unit during the late war. A man of discerning temperament and independent mindset (he was a Unitarian), and a Republican with conservative tendencies, he had been educated according to the principles of Leopold von Ranke. This school of history demanded the collection of all known sources and documents and then the rigorous appraisal of these in the course of developing a narrative replete with analysis. Langer had an extraordinary capacity, one of his last students, Brian Loring Villa, says, to pull revelations out of mundane-appearing documents: 'At squeezing lemons he was the best I have ever seen.'⁷ His residence was the venue for his senior seminars, where Marder and others would present the fruits of their labour and face the most challenging cross-examination from the master. When one student, in answer to Langer's question as to where the Italian sources were for a particular topic that demanded their use, said that he did not read that language, Langer replied sharply, 'Well, have you ever tried?'

Marder held Langer in highest regard. In 1969 he paid his mentor this tribute on the occasion of Langer's retirement:

Some of your contemporaries may have sired a more distinguished group of historians, though I wouldn't be prepared to concede this without a stiff argument. But I dare say that none of them has been responsible for launching the careers of a more devoted and appreciative band of teachers and scholars. The reasons are . . . clear enough.

Your lectures in Continental European and Near Eastern history were . . . models of lucidity, organization, and content. And they were delivered in such a compelling way – dynamism spiced with a unique sense of humour and cadence – as to become occasions eagerly looked forward to. My own teaching style has unquestionably benefited tremendously from those years in your classroom.

No less stimulating was, and is, your example as a scholar, as through your guidance . . . in seminar and your writing of those classic works of historical scholarship. I would like again to acknowledge my profound indebtedness to you for steering me into the then virginal field of naval history of the non-‘drum-and-trumpet’ sort, where I have been so happy all these years.

Finally, Bill, every one of us, [I] damn well know, is exceedingly grateful for your continuing interest in us – as individuals and as fellow professionals. Surely, few senior historians have committed perjury so often (and so successfully) on behalf of their disciples!⁸

Langer played a key role in the shaping of Marder's career. In answer to inquiries from inquisitive or puzzled Englishmen, such as a registrar of the University of London, a writer in the *Naval Review*, and Lord Mountbatten of Burma, Marder explained the origins of his historical interests in a brief autobiographical sketch that he would use for various speeches and honorary occasions:

. . . my immersion in British naval history goes back to a perfectly chance event on a lovely day in May 1930. I was then a junior at Harvard. On this day I found myself rushing down the stairs of the Widener Library in a pell-mell dash to keep a luncheon appointment. Not looking where I was heading, I ploughed into a considerably older person who was proceeding up the stairs, nearly knocking him off his feet. To my utter dismay, I realized that the enraged gentleman was none other than one of my professors, William Langer, the distinguished historian, one of the deans of modern European diplomatic history. Quickly recognizing me as one of his own, he recovered his composure to ask what topic I had chosen for my senior ‘distinction thesis’ (required of all students seeking a bachelor's degree with honours in a discipline). My reply was, ‘Some facet of the influence of the German generals on pre-war [that is, pre-1914] German foreign policy.’ But Langer dissuaded me: it was too diffuse and difficult a subject for a 50–100 page undergraduate thesis and was more suitable for a PhD dissertation. Well,

then, what would he recommend? He thought a moment. ‘Suggest you do your thesis on the Haldane Mission. The relevant British Foreign Office documents have been published recently, which would give you a chance to throw some fresh light on the subject. Besides, there are challenging possibilities in studying the relationships between foreign policy and naval policy.’

Marder knew that the secretary of state for war’s famed mission to Berlin early in 1912 was the last serious attempt of the two governments to do something about the intensified Anglo-German rivalry in naval armaments. ‘I was hazy on the details and not at all certain I would find the topic as interesting as my original one. But I agreed to give it a try.’ ‘By that autumn’, Marder recollected, ‘I had found *my* mission – to study the Royal Navy in all its ramifications from the pre-dreadnought era (the quarter-century prior to 1905) through the First World War and its immediate aftermath. My “Haldane Mission” was written in 1930–31. Subsequently, when I was a graduate student of his, Langer made sure that I would not stray too far from my new love. I did British naval seminar papers and my PhD dissertation under his direction. And so I was launched into, quite literally, uncharted seas.’⁹

Marder liked to stress how this story, though nothing remarkable, illustrated how decisive ‘fate’ can be in human affairs. Had it not been for that chance encounter on the library steps, he wrote, probably he would have dedicated himself to a lifetime’s study of the kaiser’s generals – ‘a fascinating subject, yet a thoroughly uncongenial one’. He added that it had been otherwise with his subject of choice, ‘which has been pure joy, in part because of the friendships I have made in the Service’. And ‘fate’ was indeed kind. ‘Nature abhors a vacuum’, Marder explained to *The Times*, which had expressed wonder that an American should have written so well on the subject of the Royal Navy in his five-volume *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*, ‘and there was this fat subject waiting to be picked up’.¹⁰

When asked, as he repeatedly was, why he had not chosen instead to write on the United States Navy, he answered that others had already studied it, and, in any event, he did not find American admirals particularly interesting. By that he meant that Samuel Eliot Morison’s fifteen-volume history of US naval operations in the Second World War was well under way, and that indeed the study of American naval history was well travelled. Morison, though Harvard educated and employed, was distant from Marder, and he came from the Brahmin Bostonians so far removed from Marder’s roots. There is no known connection of a scholarly sort, save for Morison’s distant association with Roskill when the latter was ‘official historian’.

Interviewing Marder in 1971, A.J.P. Taylor, the historian and critic whose rhapsodizing of Marder was significant in the latter's rise to fame, noted that it was a very curious fact that the German generals, when once put to the test of war, were no good 'and yet everybody writes books about them'. Why, asked Taylor, did nobody think about 'writing about the chaps who won, till you did in America?' Marder replied: 'I've been asked a million times: "Surely our own people are doing this, why are you mucking about with it?" And I've had to say that there was nobody really interested in modern naval history. Herbert Richmond was in his last years and he wasn't really doing it in any case, Roskill hadn't begun his career as a naval historian: there just wasn't anybody in the Navy or in the academic world concerned with it, and nature, as you well know, Alan, abhors a vacuum.'¹¹

Taylor wondered, too, if Marder's success at gaining access to materials that were denied to others was the result of his American nationality, his personal charm, the fact that he had come so far for his archival materials and that, in any case, since he had come from so far away, there really was no harm in letting him know all the secrets. 'It was my charm,' replied Marder. Glibly he recounted his meeting with Dr G.P. Gooch, the prominent English historian, and telling the great man that he hoped to get at the Admiralty papers, adding, 'I understand that nobody has got to see them for the post war period, could you help me in some way?' 'My dear young man', Gooch said wearily, 'I have tried and they have refused to do anything for me, so I think your cause is a hopeless one.' Marder, not to be dissuaded, showed a flash of opportunism that was his hallmark. 'I went back to my hotel room and decided I really had little to lose, so I wrote to the Secretary of the Admiralty. The Munich crisis was beginning to come to the boil and I, an absolute unknown, had the nerve to write these busy people. I wanted to know if they could let me see the records from 1880 to 1905 – which eventually went into *The Anatomy of British Sea Power*, published in 1940 – and I'd appreciate a reply at their earliest convenience because I expected to leave for America early in September.' He made his request the second week in August. He continued:

What they should have done was to have said: see here, we simply have never shown these documents to anybody and who are you, we don't give them to our own people, so good day. But they didn't do that: they made some reference to the fact that these documents were not available but they went on to say: and besides you tell us in your letter that you have to get back to America in a few weeks and it would take longer than that to get these records up [from safekeeping]. I was saddened

when I read it but when I reread it I saw an opening. I wrote back immediately to say that there had been a misunderstanding: I didn't have to go back early in September, I could stay until Christmas, so please don't be in a hurry. Afterwards I got it from an important Admiralty personage, who saw all the papers on this business, that the authorities were hoisted on their own petard because I'd really cut them out, and instead of falling back on the real reason which they had touched on in their letter, that the documents were out of bounds, they felt that as gentlemen they had to do something for me. They wrote to say: since you're staying around, perhaps we can do something for you – would you provide us with a list of topics on which you want information? Well, I was practically in. I gave them 20 topics, making sure that I missed nothing of importance.

The secretary, librarians, and archivists of the Admiralty were not only kind and considerate to the young American scholar: they gave him, when the rules permitted, access to certain files hitherto unused – on the condition that he would not cite them specifically. Invariably it was the Admiralty librarian as opposed to the head of the Records Office who would plead Marder's case for getting access. That he was working on an academic thesis may have eased his passage, and when the book was published the Admiralty took no steps to stand in his way. Marder stuck by the commandment of the Admiralty, stating in one telling footnote: 'The Admiralty archival material will not be cited in reference footnotes in this work.' Such initial favour did not mean subsequent success in getting access to other documents. It was one step at a time.¹² But Marder took care not to blot his copybook: on the first occasion he kept the commandment, and noted it in print. Afterwards, though, on repeated application, the Admiralty caved in reluctantly and never speedily to Marder's pleadings for access. They were anxious never to show favouritism to a foreigner when a British scholar could not get access. They also worried about secrecy being compromised.¹³

Nothing ever came easily with Marder in relation to the Admiralty, zealous guardian of its archives and secrets. In one case, discussed in chapter 4, a battle royal ensued about Marder's use of documents in print, the matter being the sensitive court-martial of Rear Admiral (later Admiral Sir) Ernest Troubridge in regard to the failure to engage the German battlecruiser *Goeben* in 1914. These and other documents were materials of the first importance, containing immense secrets hitherto unknown to the public. The Board of Admiralty, like MI5 or the CIA in our times, was chary of exposing itself to ridicule or correction. It often had to defend itself in Parliament and in the

press. Because Marder, as a contemporary historian searching the recent past in the age in which a freedom-of-information act was unheard of, always found himself butting up against access restrictions – for the ‘50-year rule’ of access then applied – his determination to get at the sources was unflinching. He was tenacious (and some thought unbearable) in his demand for access to sources. Not least, Marder had a sense of timing: if he could not get access, he would work on the ‘open’ documents, then await the opening of the ‘closed’. He did this with his first book, and with his last. He went after sources and sometimes, by twists of fate in later years, they came to him.

Marder first travelled to England in 1935–36, his last year at Harvard, on the basis of a Archibald Cary Coolidge fellowship, intended for study abroad. Apart from his stay in England, he joined other students in roaming the battlements and cathedrals of France, Holland, and Germany, and he even made a vain attempt to interview the ex-kaiser, Wilhelm II, in exile in Holland. But he spent most of the year in England completing work on his dissertation, which was called ‘English Navalism in the Nineties’. This was later incorporated in *The Anatomy of British Sea Power*. He visited Newcastle-on-Tyne, the naval yards at Chatham, and other places of shipbuilding, learning first hand certain aspects of the relationship between government and the armament industries. He met some of the leading naval writers of the times, including H.W. Wilson and Spenser Wilkinson (both in their senior years: the sole surviving agitators of the 1890s), and he interviewed a number of prominent admirals including Sir Reginald Bacon, the naval biographer. Inquiries took him to the Navy League and the labour unions. In London, incidentally, he was able to witness the funerals of the famous admirals of the fleet who had been at Jutland and later became first sea lords, John Jellicoe and David Beatty. ‘The memory of the seriously ailing Beatty walking in the funeral procession of his one-time chief is one I shall never forget,’ he recollected. He followed, too, the Ethiopian crisis, when Mussolini’s Italy extended its empire in east Africa unopposed by the British, an event that led him to wonder about the degree to which naval considerations affected, and handicapped, the makers of British foreign policy during the crisis.¹⁴ Try as he might, Marder could not get access to Admiralty papers then under wraps; his application to the secretary of the Admiralty, Sir Oswyn Murray, was held up in red tape or bureaucratic resistance, the Admiralty seeking the opinion of the Foreign Office on certain shared matters. Marder was stalled for the moment, but he had material sufficient to complete his thesis.

Throughout his travels and research inquiries, Marder kept Langer informed of his progress. Langer was pleased to hear of these advances, and on one occasion he gave the young student this salutary reminder: ‘There is

only one thing that you must be very careful about, and that is the matter of length. If you will allow me to say so, I think you have a tendency to be prolix . . . You must try hard to discipline yourself . . . Otherwise, you will continue to weaken your own work.¹⁵ Those words echo down the years, and they are an indication, but not the sole reason, of why it took Marder five volumes rather than one to complete what is generally regarded as his greatest work, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*.

Returning to Harvard in the fall of 1936, Marder became research assistant to Dr Donald Cope McKay, the historian of France, and for that term worked on various projects. By January 1937, he was across the continent in Eugene, Oregon, as an assistant professor of history at the premier university of that state, the University of Oregon. He arrived with high hopes. His teaching duties were various, and he was supposed to be there for two academic years. But covert anti-Semitism compelled his exit; his contract was not renewed despite student acclaim for his work. The chairman of the department told him within three weeks of his arrival, 'Had I known you were a Jew I would never have hired you.'¹⁶ In those days, state laws did not exclude the hiring of Jews in universities, though, as in the case of at least one distinguished Californian Jew, Abraham Nasatir, access to Berkeley was marred by racist attitudes and a transfer followed to a college in San Diego. Marder, in later years, treated it all matter-of-factly, as well he could in more comfortable times. But the event was another blow to his sense of what he could achieve professionally. His temporary professorship expired at Oregon in June 1938.

Marder rushed back to Harvard, where he was a known commodity and admired: he was named a research associate of the Bureau of International Research of Harvard University and Radcliffe College. The title seems august, even pretentious, but it covered Langer's work and that of his colleagues interested in international security. At the bureau, Marder found constant guidance and inspiration from Langer, McKay, and Michael Karpovich – 'my Harvard Godfathers' – and eventually dedicated *Anatomy* to them. Bureau grants enabled him to return to London on research, for the balance of 1938. It was on this occasion that Marder first got access to Admiralty papers. These included some Sir John Fisher papers (denied two years previous on grounds that they might not be available for decades) and Director of Naval Intelligence files. Papers of the 5th Earl Spencer, first lord of the Admiralty in the 1890s, came to him through private hands. He now came to realize that it was papers of first lords of the Admiralty (political heads) and first sea lords (professional heads) that would become his means of analysing and portraying British naval policy, warts and all: Earl Spencer's papers, and some of Sir John Fisher's, pointed the way, and Marder imagined that he might be able to

follow the trail right up through Winston Churchill's years (his first) at the Admiralty. In short, Marder's second trip to Britain on research had yielded a bountiful crop. He now knew how to gain access to papers in private hands and how, or so he thought from first experience, to approach the Admiralty with a reasonable chance of success. He had enlarged his earlier network of admirals and navalists. Not least, he had extended his connections with librarians and archivists. The Admiralty officials could see that Marder's successful entry might lead other scholars to try similarly – and, were they denied, charges of favouritism could ensue. As Marder told Langer, 'the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty have hinted that the news of the exception they have made had better not be broadcast'.¹⁷

When Marder returned to Harvard, early in 1939, he 'plunged into the writing of the opus of the century', as he jested in his entry in the Harvard class of 1931 yearbook. The approach of war in Europe affected Marder's research and made him increasingly conscious of how he held England dear. He had been attracted to Thomas Hardy and to the novelist's views of provincial town and country life, and his own travels outside London had enriched his appreciation of English ways. Back at Harvard, and in letters to his girlfriend, Martha Kaplan of Providence (addressed magically with such titles as the Crown Princess Martha, Miss Martha Magnesium, and Miss Marushka Kaplanovich), Marder warned of Hitler's threats to the United Kingdom and of Russian actions: 'Stalin has something up his sleeve'. The looming crisis dominated talk in the famed Harvard Quad; conversations discussed it from every angle, diplomatic, economic, and military. Soon Hitler waged war on Poland, and Marder's mind turned to the safety of his English friends, one of whom had foretold that England would be changed irrevocably by the war. Marder followed the war closely, especially this fateful opening campaign. But, with characteristic whimsy, he likened his pursuit of Martha to a battlefield scenario: 'In the siege of Providence the heavy artillery will be what I possess in the way of character and personality . . . teaching ability will be as effective in this campaign as the Polish cavalry outside Warsaw.' In time, Marder's approaches, 'my brazen flirtations', he called them, offended Martha, for he was simultaneously chasing one of Martha's close friends, Norma. By early 1940, in one of his letters written from 'H.M.S. Toasted English Muffin, somewhere at sea', he capitulated: the siege of Providence had been lifted.

His letters show rare insight into his work habits. Sometimes he reports the navy at anchor, with little to show for his work, and other times he reports steady progress, having got the Royal Navy through the Mediterranean crisis of 1898. Then it was on to the final eight chapters, all constructed from raw

material and masses of notes. He kept up a torrid pace and by February all the difficult chapters were finished, the book nearing completion. He aimed to get everything finished by June, with publication on Trafalgar Day, 1940. 'More and more I am coming around to my assistant's opinion that I have, if not a literary masterpiece, an outstanding historical work, one that is bound to command attention . . . Let's hope so.' Among the principal chapters was that on the Navy's relationship to the armament industry. Marder's Navy adviser, Admiral Sir Douglas Nicholson, objected to inclusion of that chapter on grounds that Marder was 'raking up old quarrels, etc.' 'Anytime I say something uncomplimentary about the navy (e.g. its inefficient condition in the 1880s), the admiral sees red! All in all a most interesting letter valuable for the psychology of an English Admiral (and a high Tory at that!). There were a few constructive suggestions which were to the point.'

Meanwhile, Marder continued his energetic, disciplined search for a mate (Martha and Norma were succeeded by, among others, a woman in Seattle as the object of pursuit). His actions bordered on the duplicitous, but he objected to being charged with playing a 'sham' game of love. No trifler, he took such matters with seriousness. His letters to Martha described a whirlwind social calendar of football games, opera, and concerts, mixed with romantic reflection on the English landscape, poetry, travel, art history, and film. (He was then teaching a pioneering course in Russian history through film.) Yet success in love eluded him.

During that same summer of problematic courting, Marder found himself in the oddest of academic circumstances. The head of the European division of the History Department of the University of North Dakota, Clarence Perkins, solicited from Langer names of prospective candidates to fill a position. The previous holder of the appointment was moving on to a possibly more agreeable spot. Could Langer help? Yes, he replied, and proposed Marder, whom he suggested was not a student of the very highest calibre but in some respects had decidedly more than average ability. 'This is notably the case in all matters requiring original investigation where he shows himself indefatigable in the search for materials.' He was attractive and fluent in speech and had extensive training in the United States and abroad. Perkins looked warmly on the letter of recommendation and, before he decided to appoint Marder, asked Langer why the candidate was willing to venture to Fargo for such a low salary of \$1,650 per annum. An odd question, surely, but Langer gave a frank answer: Marder was hungry and needed work, which was true. Perkins also asked Langer about Marder's political views and sympathies. Langer told Perkins that he could not answer for Marder's inner life but that, from all that he knew of Marder over a long period of years, he

had never heard him say anything that would indicate either Communist or Nazi sympathies. 'I am morally certain that you need fear nothing on this score.' Langer's responses satisfied Perkins. Marder was duly appointed pending legal confirmation. Excited about the prospects, the jubilant Marder even sent an article to the *Journal of Modern History*, subsequently published, in which he prematurely gave his institutional affiliation as University of North Dakota.¹⁸

Marder's appointment lasted a week. Perkins sent two letters to Langer dated 10 June 1940: the first in which he said Marder was appointed, the second reporting that more information had been received about Marder and that this definitely precluded his appointment by the state's Board of Higher Education. What that additional information is will never be known: neither History Department nor Board of Higher Education files give a hint. It must be recalled that United States isolationism was the prevailing political opinion in those days and also that North Dakota was a conservative, agrarian state backing isolationist positions. Marder, in contrast, was a committed internationalist. It could also be that Marder was a member of some political organization or club or that he was aiding Jewish refugees. Or perhaps Perkins found out from Oregon that Marder was a Jew. In any event, Langer got hot under the collar when he received Perkins's second letter, which took him to task for not telling the entire truth about Marder and, as Langer put it, gave the impression that he 'knew from the outset of the factor which now makes his appointment impossible.' Langer told Perkins that this insinuation was wholly gratuitous, especially since Perkins would not reveal the particulars. 'I gave you all the information about Marder that I had and answered your questions to the best of my ability. Naturally I am not acquainted with the private lives of all my students, neither can I answer for what they may have done here or there . . . I have never misrepresented a student knowingly to anyone, and I have not done so in this case. Frankly, I am simply flabbergasted by your letter, particularly by the imputation of lack of integrity on my part.' The only clue Perkins gave Langer of the reason for the turn-down was his statement that, although he had not the slightest doubt of Marder's research and teaching ability, the young scholar would 'unquestionably . . . be successful, but NOT HERE'. In other words, the political world of North Dakota could not support a man of Marder's origins, views, or activities. Another door had slammed shut against Marder, and the only record of this strange affair is to be found in Langer's files.¹⁹ But Langer never failed Marder; in fact, his professional devotion to him only increased with the years.

Despite social distractions and academic-appointment reverses, the text for his book was completed on schedule and sent to Alfred A. Knopf, the

prominent New York publisher with whom Langer had personal connections.²⁰ *Anatomy of British Sea Power*, when delivered to the publisher, bearing a preface dated Cambridge, Massachusetts, July 1940, was massive – in print, it would number six hundred pages. Knopf groaned about the length; Langer assured him that it was all first-rate material. In addition, the timing for this book was remarkably astute though unintended, for Marder did not have a future war in mind when he commenced research on it. In the early 1940s a great struggle between forces of darkness were being worked out in Europe. As in 1588, England's survival was again at stake as country after country fell under the Nazi yoke, leaving the eyes of the world again turned to English shores and their surrounding seas. Before long, proofs were available, and a copy was sent across the Atlantic to win the hoped-for support of a prominent British house, Putnam. The latter requested the advice of Commander Gordon Steele (winner of the Victoria Cross for valour in the Royal Navy's engagement with the Red Russian Navy at Kronstadt in 1919), who promptly replied that an English version would be a great success and of interest to the general public as well as 'the large naval circle of the present day'. The book was likely to become the standard text for all naval educational establishments and was likely to appear in all libraries of Royal Navy ships. It was, he said, a complete and accurate record of the period it covered. What impressed Steele was the considerable trouble that Marder had gone to compile the work: 'He sets his subject out in an unbiased bold style, with reserved personal opinions and sound comments, thereby forming a very valuable addition to naval literature.' Steele thought British readers would like a different title than *Anatomy*, an unfortunate one, he said, when applied to naval history. To this he added: 'The term "navalist" is a good one, when one gets used to it, but a footnote to explain it as used in the same sense as "militarist" in the Army, would soften what readers well regard as an Americanism.' He also pointed out that terms such as Royal Navy and Admiralty should be spelt with capitals. Such points, when corrected, would make for a good book, he predicted, and thus closed his unqualified recommendation for acceptance.²¹ As to titles, Steele suggested 'The Vital Years of British Sea Power', or 'British Naval Policy, 1880–1905', or 'The Construction of British Sea Power, Being a Naval Historical Record', with same dates. In the end, the second was chosen for the English edition.

The London edition appeared in September 1941, but, since it had been printed in the United States, Putnam had to import copies under licence and, consequently, the numbers available were few, in the low hundreds. Marder was advised by the chairman of Putnam that 'there appears to be no question that we shall sell out our stock. Whether then we can get a licence

to import further copies is by no means certain.' But, should sales not be up to expectations, the chairman fell back on that old reliable: the reviews were superb. He closed his letter with 'congratulations on the splendid reception that your book has had in England, which is perhaps more notable than you realise, as there is often a prejudice here against American books on essentially British subjects.'²²

Marder's *Anatomy of British Sea Power* offered an immense tour of the horizon of British naval influence. In the age of Pax Britannica, the Navy sailed all oceans and most of their watery annexes. British power extended globally, though such influence was neither ubiquitous nor of paramount effect and imperial overstretch brought immense burdens to the British state. Marder's research thus took him through documents concerning the state of affairs on the shores of east Asia, the Cape of Good Hope and other coasts of Africa, the Caribbean as a cockpit of empires, and, above all, the Mediterranean, that parade ground of British naval might. British actions were predicated on an informed response to French, German, Russian, Japanese, and American rivalries (sometimes in combination); and, in an era when continental European powers were extending their influence offshore, the Royal Navy was a counter to blue-water rivals and, often, inshore competitors alike. Marder's knowledge of these affairs acquired global proportions, though necessarily viewed from the perspective of Whitehall and Westminster, the financial interests of the city of London, and naval and armaments constructors. His familiarity with foreign languages (except, at this stage, Japanese) extended his scholarly reach.

All this, too, was preparation for pioneering teaching work in world, or global, history. Not a narrow subject, and rather the reverse, British naval history opened up international perspectives. As Marder saw it, British naval history was something on which the sun never set; only the history of the navies of the British dominions escaped him, possibly because he saw them as ancillary to his larger tale. His book disclosed the naval rivalries of the age attendant on the collapse of the Chinese empire and the rise of German and Russian influence there. How Asian affairs effected a European revolution in naval rivalries was a radical departure in history; this was the Marder touch. He offered a sharp, new perspective on international affairs and history, long before the quest of the kaiser and Grossadmiral Alfred von Tirpitz to secure Germany its own place in the sun based on a calculated theory of risk management. The key year was 1893, when the British set about rebuilding their fleet so as to maintain a clear check on a combination of the next two naval powers, France and Russia. The famed innovative battleship *Dreadnought*, with its superior guns, armour, and speed, was the logical

extension of the British search for enhanced naval security, and Marder's account of it formed the natural conclusion to his mammoth book.

Marder always cited the book as *Anatomy of British Sea Power*, and reviewers in Britain had little problem with that, though the medical and possibly pathological allusions made for interesting dissection. The receptions accorded to the book make for fascinating reading nowadays, and it must be remembered that, at the time the book came into print, the United States was not yet in the war. When the London edition came out, a few months later, British defence rested critically on sea power.

Academic journals, invariably slow to comment on books, judged the work on its scholarly merits. It was in the press, however, that the most telling responses appeared. In the *New Republic* (31 March 1941) Dr Alfred Vagts of Princeton, influential military historian of German sea power, reported the work to be an anatomy of the *cholera* rather than the subsequent *melancholy* of British sea power. The era Marder had described was one abounding in panics, and the reviewer wondered whether the nation acquired thereby such immunity to scares that in the 1930s it could look with equanimity on the obvious dangers to its security along the Rhine and in Spain. Vagts wanted more on Anglo-American naval cooperation, a differentiation among the various causes of the naval scares, and, above all, the laying of a finger definitely on the focal infection of Anglo-German relations. He was looking for traditional questions: 'Who rather than what was the British navy at the time? Where did its officers come from? Were the avenues still kept open for the Nelsons? Or were the days of naval genius over in England as elsewhere and had the officers altogether become engineers or bureaucrats with the German [Grossadmiral] Tirpitz as the supreme type of naval official, politician and organizer in his day?'

In all, it was a thoughtful review, but it got Marder's goat. From his office in Widener Library at Harvard, he answered Vagts' dissection of his *Anatomy*, particularly the reviewer's disappointment at the absence of certain elements not supposed to be there in the first place. Marder replied that he never intended to write a history of Anglo-German relations. As to the social background of naval officers, 'Mr Vagts . . . can't understand my failure to ride his hobbyhorse with him. The fact is that I have written on the *whys* and *wherefores* of the British navy, not on the *whos*,' and he pointed out that the English naval historian Michael Lewis had recently published his book *England's Sea-Officers*. But Marder was tetchy, even ungracious – he could not leave any point of criticism alone, as this sentence of his, in his reply of 5 May 1941, makes clear: 'Mr Vagts, relenting, is generous enough to describe my treatment of the origins of the dreadnought as "good, if not definitive".'

Since, as explained in the volume, I have examined every pertinent source on the subject, including all the hitherto inaccessible records of Sir John Fisher, the father of the dreadnought policy, I am curious to know what Mr Vagts could add to my account.' The arrogance shows, or was it just academic pride? Vagts had wanted a more philosophical treatment, to which Marder replied that he was writing history – and, correctly, that the field was practically unexplored: 'I have been content to show how and why the Royal Navy and British naval policy developed as they did. The book, I maintain, remains what it set out to be: "a reasonably complete study" of British naval policy in the pre-dreadnought era.'

Vagts had the last word, as a reviewer should: 'As there will be many who share Dr Marder's concept of history', he replied, 'perhaps a word of explanation is due.' Vagts thought the 'who' also to be the 'why' of history – personnel of armed forces often explain policies, even down to the choice of arms. The study of personnel is sometimes better than the studying of documents, he said. Vagts showed the wisdom of his years when he queried: 'Is Dr Marder, who claims to have 'examined every pertinent source', oblivious of the basic historiographical principle that what is not in the documents may still be in the world? Or does Dr Marder think that the modern mass army, the *levée en masse*, might just as well have appeared in the frozen autocracy of old Austria as in the socio-economic conditions of France during the Revolution? To my way of thinking, military and naval developments of all countries bear the marks of their backgrounds.' And then the telling last line, one of broad vision, which may or may not have stopped Marder in his tracks: 'No doubt Dr Marder has done exactly what he set out to do . . . my hope was merely to stimulate him and other able students – a few of whom now turn to military and naval history – to a broader and more ambitious formulation of their historical problems.' Marder had received an invaluable lesson from Vagts, and in the years to come he was never to forget the role of personality and character in the making of history.

Other American journals showed interest and expressed a variety of opinions. The *Christian Science Monitor* (23 November 1940), granting high praise, cut to the quick: 'Accelerated naval construction created huge industrial enterprises that grew fat on what they fed on. When the world was progressing peaceably, business was bad . . . everyone wanted ships: capital because it wanted dividends; labour, because it wanted wages. Thus when a French militarist wrote a thesis on how to invade England by flat boats, financial prosperity in England went up with the national temperature.' Rampant imperialism provided a potent additive. Thus, Marder's history was 'really only Exhibit A in a lesson on the pitfalls of nationalistic ambition

which people everywhere are just beginning to take to heart.' The *Philadelphia Inquirer* (11 December 1940) remarked that, because the United States 'apparently will inherit the supremacy at sea wrested by England from Spain so long ago and for so long defended by the British against the challenge of the Dutch, the French and the Germans', the implications and problems of sea power, new to Americans, 'the great land-exploiters of the world', were of great moment. A precursor to Paul Kennedy's argument in *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers* (1988), Marder's book compared the British problems of the 1880–1905 era to the American problems recently inherited: 'These problems comprised insular security, imperial protection, pressure by the armament industries, irresponsible political opportunism, and the stubborn stupidity of men encased in tradition. Each has its parallel in our country and in our time, right now, here, today, this minute.'

In Britain, where such matters as Marder had written about remained largely unknown from the naval angle, blunt and full comments came from well-informed sources. Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond, Britain's prominent naval historian, writing in the *Spectator* (26 September 1941), proclaimed *Anatomy* to be a most valuable and informing work, replete with lessons for all time. 'The story that Mr Marder unfolds is that of the danger – the very real danger, as we can see today – to which Great Britain is exposed, of the struggles of those who pointed out the danger of the technical problems both of personnel and material, that had to be solved.' Then as now, Richmond said, the two issues were invasion and stoppage of trade. Soldiers might argue for a stronger army if naval defence were frail and Admiral Fisher might worry that starvation was the key worry if the navy were beaten in war. Protection of shipping required the building of cruisers; coordination between naval and military forces rendered difficult the finding of solutions. The only matter with which Richmond took issue was Marder's terminology: 'Though it is clear that the author appreciates the fact that sea-power is the foundation-stone of British security he is curiously derogatory in the epithets he employs in regard to the movements made during those years to revive public interest, overcome apathy and maintain the navy. Those statesmen, pressmen, and seamen who opened the eyes of the public to their danger he calls variously navalists, sensational agitators and panic-mongers.' Richmond thought 'scares', 'bogeys', and 'panics', some of which led to 'hysterical shrieks', unsuitable terminology and usage in such a fine book. Otherwise it was 'an exhaustive and highly informing volume'.

These themes were taken up by the *Birmingham Mail* (16 September 1941), with particular note of the battle waged behind the scenes between the Army and the Navy. In *Time and Tide*, the noted critic D.P. Capper said that,

whereas some readers might think that Marder's book was poorly timed in its appearance ('Could any book be more ludicrously inopportune than one which examines the details of our domestic politics and naval controversies in the days before Germany became a rival at sea?'), the fact was that, conversely, this book was 'one of those rare monumental works by American authors which, born to be great, triumph over their moment of birth. It would be hard to find a text more carefully documented . . . one could wish at times that the author had allowed himself a little more elbow-room from his authorities.' Capper noted the escalating tensions of the era – the competitive naval building – and the fact that scarcely a year passed without some great power casting a threatening shadow over British waters. In 1896, to take one year, France, Russia, Germany, Turkey, and the United States posed hostile positions of one sort or another. The Two-Power Standard – according to which the Royal Navy had to match the combined fleets of any two rival naval powers – was the natural outcome, 'but it is particularly interesting to note the effect of party politics on naval expansion, and of naval expansion upon party politics.'

A reviewer in the *Glasgow Herald* pointed out laconically (14 October 1941) that it had fallen to an American to write a book of fundamental importance on the first great crisis of modern British sea power. Marder, the reviewer thought, had overplayed his hand with respect to the shrieks and groans of the alarmists: he was perhaps unappreciative of the British public's natural alarm when threats to its naval primacy occurred. Britain's security and influence in Europe were due to its insular position, which led to the view that 'there was no help unless the sure shield of the Navy was held between the island and the great military Powers of the Continent.' The great French historian Jules Michelet had said, in explanation of the fundamentals of British policy, that England was an island. 'And the man in the street', stressed the reviewer, 'without any very deep thought, was resolved that, cost what it might, the island was going to remain one. Doubtless this made him the victim of fools and knaves, but in the last 10 years the absence of this automatic reaction that has proved our moral and intellectual progress over our fathers has been purchased at a very considerable price, which is not being paid.' Worth noting too, in the reviewer's opinion, was that historical inquiry into British naval policy for the pre-1880s had revealed similar variants of hysteria: navalist hyperbole was a fact of life, and it grew in intensity with demands of press and Parliament, factors that Marder had been the first to explore.²³

It was in the *Naval Review*, a privately published journal whose circulation was restricted to naval officers, that the fullest analysis of Marder's book

appeared, and for good reason.²⁴ That journal, which Richmond's energies had been so effective in developing just before the First World War, was dedicated to open but unattributable discussion on all manner of naval and defence matters. Aimed at encouraging commentary on subjects relating to the efficiency of the Navy (in peace or war), the *Naval Review* offered a forum, a place of comment and disputation, that the hidebound Navy so desperately needed, said Richmond and his cohorts.

Marder's book came to 'H.W.R.' – Richmond himself – for review. That critic pointed out that very few studies had ever addressed Marder's topic – but ought to have. The *Cambridge Modern History*, or histories of British foreign policy, even collections of British foreign-policy documents such as 'Gooch and Temperley',²⁵ failed to throw light on the widespread, significant problems arising out of, and influencing, British naval policy. 'And it is not a subject with which naval officers should be ignorant.' History no longer ends at Waterloo, Richmond chided, for the nineteenth century could be seen as furnishing the key to the problems the British were dealing with in 1941. 'If the people of this country had been a little better acquainted with the criminal record of modern Germany – the Germany of the last seventy or so years – it is at least possible that so much nonsense about the 'wicked' Versailles Treaty would not have been written, or so much weakness shown to her while she was breaking that Treaty and rearming herself for another attempt on the liberties of the world. Nor, it may also be surmised, should we, in the persons of our statesmen, have played ducks and drakes with the Navy and allowed a Government of very ignorant men to emasculate the Service on which our safety so pre-eminently rests.' Richmond regretted that such a supremely important topic should have been addressed by a foreigner. It was galling to think that the story was written by a Harvard University research scholar and that it was financed by an American university. He criticized Marder for seemingly treating the hysteria of the navalists with disdain, but he balanced this with appreciation of Marder's assessment of the administrators, one might even say saviours, of the Navy, including the first sea lord, Sir Frederick Richards, whose name Marder had rescued from the scrapheap of history. Considering the perilous position of 1941, when British statesmen had squandered away Britain's predominance by naval treaties and peace arrangements of no benefit to the premier maritime nation, Richmond found in Marder's book a lesson for all time. 'The need for preventing these well-meaning but dangerous citizens from once more destroying the defences of the country will again arise, and a thorough acquaintance with the past will be of service as a warning and a guide resisting these efforts.'

To this he added, quoting *The Times* of December 1894: 'We do not accuse our rulers of lack of patriotism, but the traditions of a reckless, heedless, and in the end ruinous economy are still potent . . . in our public offices . . . the strength of the navy is never adequately maintained unless the country insists on its rulers doing their duty.'

Marder had examined public opinion in regard to the Navy and to national security, and that was to his credit. He was critical of at least one other scholar, E.L. (Sir Llewellyn) Woodward, a fellow of All Souls, who in *Great Britain and the German Navy* (1935) had treated public opinion 'very superficially'. Langer had taught Marder and others to research the newspapers and the learned journals of the time, and that the young scholar had done. In so doing, he found too many warnings lightly turned aside. Writing in an era when 'navalism' was still regarded as a disease, and a cause of the Great War – it had been one of President Woodrow Wilson's fundamental causes – Marder was not about to be taken in by the axiom that if you will have peace you should prepare for war (*Si vis pacem para bellum*), so beloved of Admiral Fisher. He steered away from such rhetoric, and his American position gave him advantageous detachment.

As Marder saw it, and he repeated this time and again, his job as a historian was to tell the story, to let the facts speak for themselves. 'Not being a "naval expert", my sole aim has been to give the facts, or, as a certain Talleyrand once said: "Je ne blâme ni n'approve: je raconte."' Later, true to form, Marder would restate this credo:

I bring no theories of history to my research and writing, nor do I arrive at any startling conclusions. I am essentially a narrative historian. I want to tell a story and to tell it well, and with a liberal infusion of the personal, the human, component, for at bottom, to quote Sir Lewis Namier: 'The subject matter of history is human affairs, men in action, things which have happened and how they happened.' The world is indeed more a stage than a laboratory. One aspect of this outlook is my conviction that the writing of history must include a sense of how events appeared to the participants, bereft of the knowledge possessed by historians and others writing long afterwards. The story that I shall tell [in *Old Friends, New Enemies*, about the Royal Navy and the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN)] is, basically, a tragic one, with man's limitations all too prominently displayed, such as his moral cowardice at times and his short-sighted thinking. Yet it will also show man at his sublime best, for there are many instances of courage, moral as well as physical, of far-sightedness, and of an extraordinary spirit of self-sacrifice.²⁶