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PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM LETRAS/INGLÊS

**THE RECEPTION OF
W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM'S WORKS**

por

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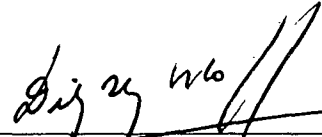
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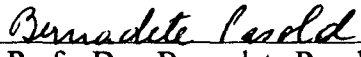
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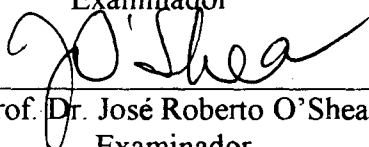
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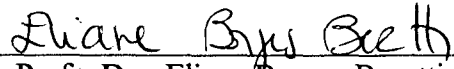
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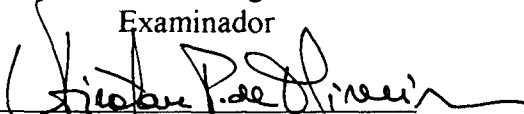

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To my nieces and nephews:
Michelly, Gabriela, Débora, Israel, and Gabriel,
hoping that with this work I have somehow
helped to straighten their road.

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ABSTRACT

THE RECEPTION OF W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM'S WORK

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This work aims to study the position held by the English novelist W. Somerset Maugham in the contemporary literature of his country. If on one hand Maugham has never been definitely branded a mere best-seller writer, on the other hand, he has never been attributed a major status either. He has remained in a kind of ambiguous position in English literature. Reinforcing this situation there is still the fact that some of his novels, although as popular, at the time of their release, as the modern best-sellers, have had a long-standing life which is not typical of this kind of literature. By analyzing the critical reception of six of his novels, each one from a different phase of his writing career, based on some principles of Hans Robert Jauss's aesthetics of reception we have identified the elements that were especially relevant in the definition of Maugham's literary status. Besides, as it is still predicted in Jauss's theory, we have also pointed out some changes in interest in literary studies that portent a revival and possibly a reevaluation of Maugham's oeuvre in the future.

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RESUMO

Este trabalho objetiva estudar a posição do romancista inglês W. Somerset Maugham na literatura contemporânea de seu país. Se por um lado Maugham nunca foi definitivamente rotulado como um simples escritor de best-sellers, por outro lado nunca lhe foi atribuído o status de grande escritor. Ele se mantém numa espécie de posição ambígua na literatura inglesa. Reforçando essa situação há ainda o fato de que alguns de seus romances, embora tenham sido tão populares, na época de seu lançamento, quanto os modernos best-sellers têm experimentado uma duração que não é usual nesse tipo de literatura. Ao analisar a recepção crítica de seis de seus romances, um de cada fase de sua carreira literária, baseado em alguns princípios da estética da recepção de Hans Robert Jauss, nós identificamos os elementos que foram especialmente relevantes na definição do status literário de Maugham. Além disso, conforme ainda é previsto na teoria de Jauss, nós também apontamos algumas mudanças de interesse nos estudos literários que indicam um ressurgimento e possivelmente uma reavaliação da obra de Maugham no futuro.

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INTRODUCTION

An author has the right to be judged by his best [works].

(W. Somerset Maugham)

It is not such a difficult task to name the major and the minor writers of a past literary period. When dealing with contemporary writers, however, this task might present some real difficulty. It is always troublesome to evaluate writers who have not yet been consecrated by time. When we take a close look at the critical reception of some contemporary writers, we perceive that there are some that have become especially difficult for the critics to label as either major or minor writers within the literature of their own country. In the recent history of English literature W. Somerset Maugham is one of these writers who have let the critics confused and uncertain about his proper place and importance in the literature of his own country.

In contemporary English literature Maugham has never been attributed the same importance that people like Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and D.H. Lawrence bear, all of them his contemporaries. On the other hand, neither has he been classified as a mere potboiler writer nor has he been put aside entirely as such. If many critics insist on disparaging or just ignoring Maugham's work, others, among them some very important ones, have paid special attention to it and recognized its literary value. This situation has given room to a peculiar relationship between Maugham and his critics that is frequently mentioned by those scholars who have paid especial attention to Maugham's production.

With an accusatory tone and throwing doubts on the credibility of some critics' evaluation of Maugham's production, Karl G. Pfeiffer, in *W. Somerset Maugham – A Candid Portrait*, is the first to, as early as 1959, make an analysis of Maugham's troublesome relationship with critics and reviewers. He begins by mentioning a time, in the very beginning of his literary career, when Maugham was respected and admired by the English literary critics as well as by the intelligentsia of his time. However, Pfeiffer suggests that it was not only Maugham's literary talent that favored him in the eyes of those critics and intellectuals, but also two other factors that certainly were not appreciated by Maugham himself. First of all, it was his social situation for, at that time, Maugham was far from being a bourgeois.

Actually, he was then living in a small flat near Victoria Station in London that had to be shared with a friend. Secondly, and apparently more important in Maugham's reputation with the critics and the intellectuals, is the fact that his novels were not popular. Here, Pfeiffer is suggesting that this fact was especially important to those critics and intellectuals because when praising Maugham's novels they would not be running the risk of enjoying the same kind of literature ordinary people would read.

Success would change this situation entirely. This is, in Pfeiffer's words, what happened to Maugham's relationship with the intelligentsia when his works became successful:

Success was very satisfying, but one by-product of it was unpleasant. Despite his frequent protests to the contrary, Maugham has never fully recovered from the mortifying effects of it. So long as he wrote highbrow plays and unsuccessful novels, Maugham was looked upon as a promising young writer and an intellectual in good standing, and he took a modest pride in this honorable condition. But when he had the audacity to produce four popular plays simultaneously, he was ignominiously dropped by the intellectuals of the day, and their descendants have never picked him up.²

It was in 1908 that Maugham had four plays running simultaneously in London. These plays mark the beginning of his indisposition with the critics and intellectuals. It should be also noticed that at that time Maugham was still in the very beginning of his career since his first fictional book had been released in 1897 and the last would be published only in 1948³.

Still according to Pfeiffer, that situation made Maugham unhappy. In spite of his denials, Pfeiffer says he always wished a critical acclaim just like the popular one he was receiving. However, when he had to choose, he preferred to continue being successful although that meant to be looked down by the critics and the intelligentsia.

Besides his popularity, Pfeiffer still points out other reasons for Maugham's discredit with the critics. One of these was his productivity. According to Pfeiffer, Maugham was aware that fertility in a writer is just considered merit when he is dead. That was another demand he refused to take in order to conform to the standards imposed by the critics. He kept writing until the last years of his life. Actually, his last piece of fiction, *Catalina*, was written when he was already seventy-four.

Another reason is the variation in the quality of Maugham's production. According to Pfeiffer's suggestion, Maugham was also aware of this characteristic of his production.

However, it seems that throughout his life his bank account was a greater concern than his literary reputation. In an article entitled "The Three Novels of a Poet" in which, besides discussing the three novels of Goethe, Maugham also tells some facts of the life of the German writer, there is a moment in which he says about him:

I don't know that those who have bitterly blamed Goethe for throwing himself away by entering the service of a petty German Prince have suggested any other course he might have taken. As I have said over and over again and can get no one to believe: authors do not like to starve in garrets.⁴

From this assertion, we can be sure that Maugham was happy with his financial success. For being his way of preventing starvation, he had no guilt feeling concerning it. That's why he would not mind so much the classification of potboiler attributed to some of his books. They might not have pleased the critics, but certainly prevented him from becoming a famous dead author.

Although Maugham kept this point of view throughout his career, Pfeiffer defends him against the accusation that he was exclusively money-ridden in his writing. Pfeiffer says that, from a certain point of his life onwards, Maugham felt he had enough financial security to write whatever pleased him regardless of the public's and the critics' approval. This would be evinced by his decision to write two plays, namely, *For Services Rendered* (1932) and *Sheppey* (1933), which he did out of a personal pleasure although he knew they were meant to be unsuccessful, as it really happened.

Another Maugham scholar who also analyzes his relationship with the critics is Richard Cordell. In his book *Somerset Maugham – A Biographical and Critical Study*, published in 1961, there is a whole chapter dedicated to this theme which is entitled "Maugham and the Critics."⁵ In it, Cordell analyzes Maugham's relationship with the critics in the two genres he dealt with, namely, prose (including not only his novels but also short story collections, travel books, memoirs, and literary criticism) and drama. Here, we will only dwell upon Cordell's view of the critics' attitudes towards Maugham's prose.

In a broad view of Maugham's relationship with the critics, Cordell considers that more than being attacked by the critics, he was ignored by them. To confirm his point of view, Cordell raises the name of all the studies on the modern novel that had been recently published. In some of them there is not any reference at all to either Maugham or any of his

works. In those where Maugham is mentioned he is treated with condescension and – to use Cordell’s expression – “damned” with faint praise.

Cordell tries to decipher the bafflement of some critics at Maugham’s real literary worth. The majority of the critics seemed to have always gotten irritated with what they consider Maugham’s failure in being as good as writers like Joyce, Lawrence, and Marcel Proust. At the same time, they also get irksome with the respectful attention Maugham received of a few reputable American and European, and even non-European critics. Among these critics, Cordell mentions Paul Dottin and Suzanne Guéry in France, Helmut Papajewski in Germany, and Yoshio Nakano in Japan. In Cordell’s view, Maugham himself helped his detractors with assertions such as: “My own native gifts are not remarkable,” “My writing is a harmless habit that happens to be profitable,” “I know just where I stand; in the very front row of the second-raters.” All that contributed to Maugham’s ambiguous position in English literature.

As a typical example of the critics’ reaction to Maugham, Cordell picks up Edmund Wilson’s review of *Then and Now*, a novel published in 1946. More than just an analysis of that novel, Wilson’s article is an attack against Maugham’s entire oeuvre. Besides criticizing severely Maugham’s fictional works, Wilson expresses a great discomfort with his critical comments on other writers. At a certain point, Cordell mentions Wilson’s indignation with the honors paid to Maugham at his presenting of the manuscript of *Of Human Bondage* to the Library of Congress. He was greatly irritated with the tendency, in the late 1940’s, to elevate Maugham into the higher ranks of English fiction.

We can say that Wilson’s review is exemplary of the kind of criticism Maugham received for two reasons. First of all because it repeats hackneyed clichés about Maugham such as his being a second-rate writer and his lack of profundity in the development of characters and theme. Secondly, it reveals a great load of personal antipathy against Maugham. This is the conclusion reached by Curtis and Whitehead in their analysis of Wilson’s article. In their own words, they say: “That all this was the product of prejudice, if not actual malice, is suggested by Wilson’s later comment on his own review: ‘You know, I think I settled that fellow’s hash. And do you know, I’ve never read *Of Human Bondage*, *Cakes and Ale* and *The Razor’s Edge*?’”⁶

Closing his considerations on the reviews of Maugham's main novels, Cordell tries to define their predominant criticism by the adjectives attributed to them. His conclusion is an irony. According to him, through the years Maugham was praised for what he considered his flaws and censured for what he regarded as his virtues.

Another scholar who has also dedicated a special attention to the study of Maugham's works is Robert Lorin Calder who published, in 1972, *W. Somerset Maugham & The Quest for Freedom*⁷. In his book, Calder also analyzes Maugham's relationship with the critics, asserting that he always had a following of responsible critics but, at the same time, the majority has dismissed him as a superficial commercial author.

Just like Cordell, Calder also understands that the critics have never been able to render a proper assessment of Maugham's literary importance. In his view, he remains in a kind of limbo for, unlike other writers, he has never been elevated to greatness or been completely related to the second-rate. In spite of his many obvious literary skills, the critics have always felt a lack of something essential to great writing. Maugham seems to have always passed to the critics the feeling that he could have done better than he actually did. Calder reveals that this uncertainty concerning Maugham's real literary worth is what led Malcolm Cowley to label it "The Maugham Enigma," in an article published in *The New Republic*, in 1938, and that some time later, in 1954, would be borrowed by Klaus W. Jonas to name his collection of articles on Maugham.

In listing the reasons for the critics' attitude towards Maugham's works, Calder will repeat some that, as we have seen, were already pointed out by Pfeiffer. First of all, he says that critics have always been suspicious of versatility. They cannot accept that Maugham was able to produce works of quality in areas as diverse as novels, short stories, plays, travel books, and memoirs. Since the plays he wrote in the beginning of his writing career had a strong popular appeal, the critics assumed that the prose Maugham produced later had necessarily the same quality. Their initial approach to them was prejudiced and remained so throughout his career.

Another inevitable reason pointed out by Calder is Maugham's financial success. The critics, according to Calder, cannot accept that a living writer can be popularly successful and, at the same time, produce serious literature. Being financially successful means necessarily being popular. So, we again have one of these reasons pointed out by Pfeiffer for

Maugham's discredit with the critics. In this aspect, Calder thinks that even the magazines where some of Maugham's short stories first appeared contributed to reinforce his fame of popular writer. Those magazines to which Calder refers are publications such as *Cosmopolitan*, *Hearst's Magazine*, and *Nash's Magazine* where many of Maugham's short stories were published.

A last reason Calder points out is a certain amount of antipathy to Maugham which is a consequence of personal antagonism. Certainly, the example of Edmund Wilson's article given by Cordell could be included here. But, actually, Calder is referring to the fact that many people found unforgivable his use in fiction of people he had met. Besides, his attacks on the follies and vices of the English middle and upper classes contributed to his rejection among his own countrymen.

Calder asserts that Maugham deserves much more attention than he has so far received from critics. In his opinion, although Maugham cannot be ranked with the greatest English writers, he is undoubtedly better than most of those in the second rank. Actually, Calder defends he should be treated with more academic respect.

Finally, Calder concludes his analysis of Maugham's relationship with the critics raising a question about the way his production could be fairly assessed. His intention is to draw attention to the inadequacy of the application of certain criteria to an assessment of Maugham's works. For instance, if only the current predominant criteria are applied, Maugham runs the risk of occupying no space in literary surveys since this is an age when literary criticism's main concern is with experiments in form. Calder points out his readership as a more appropriate criterion. According to him, although it is constituted by a large number of people with a more popular taste, many other readers whose critical sensibilities are highly developed also enjoy Maugham.

After Calder's, the most recent analysis of Maugham's relationship with the critics appears in *W. Somerset Maugham – The Critical Heritage* edited by Anthony Curtis and John Whitehead in 1987. In its *Introduction*⁸ they began by quoting Maugham himself who asserts in *The Summing Up* (1938) to have no illusions about his literary position. According to the editors, he still adds to that assertion:

There are but two important critics in my own country who have troubled to take me seriously and when clever young men write essays about

contemporary fiction they never think of considering me. I do not resent it. It is very natural⁹.

Curtis and Whitehead say this is not true. Deep inside, Maugham resented that the critics did not appreciate him. In their interpretation, the two important English critics to whom Maugham refers are Desmond MacCarthy and probably Raymond Mortimer. Curtis and Whitehead draw attention to the fact that this is the situation of Maugham's critical reception in England. A glance across the Channel would reveal a very different situation.

According to Curtis and Whitehead, Maugham himself tried to explain the critics' indifference towards his works. He believed that the reason for it was that he had never been a propagandist nor innovative in his writing technique like, for instance, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, or even Marcel Proust in France. Curtis and Whitehead quote passages from Maugham's *The Summing Up* which reveal his traditional attitude was assumed out of a personal conviction of what literature should be. He disagreed and disapproved of the experimentalism carried out by those modernist authors. Besides, he considered them just as bright stars meant to dwindle into obscurity soon.

In spite of the apparent strong conviction of Maugham's words, Curtis and Whitehead doubt whether he really meant what he said. They think it is hard to believe that Maugham, with all the knowledge of literature he had, could not perceive that those perpetrators of "novelties" - as he would refer to the modernist writers - were really changing the face of literature.

But Curtis and Whitehead have their own interpretation of the critics' indifference to Maugham's production. They assert that, contrary to what is commonly said, Maugham could not complain that his books suffered from lack of notice. To Maugham's extensive production, the editors of cultural pages responded with a generous allotment of space.

Now, in spite of such an extensive reception, Curtis and Whitehead understand that Maugham was the best critic of his own work. Whereas critics would be erratic, superficial or merely prejudiced in their evaluation, Maugham would appraise it coolly and judiciously. Here, Curtis and Whitehead are suggesting that the main problem with Maugham's critical reception is the quality of the reviewers. Maugham was plentifully reviewed but by the wrong people.

Like Calder, Curtis and Whitehead understand that the blame for so much unsatisfactory response should be partly put on Maugham himself. First of all, because of his insistence in being provocative when representing and analyzing English society. Secondly, because of his somehow low evaluation of his own literary merits. The irony of Maugham's evaluation of his own production, which is not pointed out by Curtis and Whitehead, is that it is underlined by Maugham's desire to defend himself and his works from attacks. It is obvious that he assumed an attitude of humility in English literature but certainly, deep inside, he expected a better attention and evaluation of his production by the first-rate critics.

Like Pfeiffer, Curtis and Whitehead emphasize the difference between the review of Maugham's first books and that of the later ones. By the time of his first publications, he was seen as a young writer with a very promising career ahead. Although *Liza of Lambeth* and *Mrs Craddock* in a way displeased the late-Victorian sensibility, critics believed that Maugham would soon produce a major realist novel. Nonetheless, this friendly relationship began breaking apart when Maugham started writing romantic comedies in the Oscar Wilde tradition. Besides, as Calder had already mentioned, at that time there was an accusation that would be repeated by others throughout his career and that helped to create a negative image of him as a writer. That was the accusation of putting a friend into his fiction, giving him a very unfavorable depiction.

In an attempt to provide a brief view of the criticisms that Maugham's work received throughout his entire career, and especially of those which were unfavorable, Curtis and Whitehead assert many of them were driven by a personal animosity and prejudice against Maugham. An irrefutable example they offer is again Edmund Wilson's disparaging review of Maugham's production by the time *Then and Now* was released.

Curtis and Whitehead conclude their Introduction revealing that what Maugham asserted about Edward Driffield, one of the main characters in *Cakes and Ale* (1930), also became true about him. In the same way that old age changed Driffield into the Grand Old Man of the English Letters, critics became milder towards Maugham as he grew older. This could be noticed in the articles collected in *The Maugham Enigma* published when he was already eighty. In general, those articles are emphatic about Maugham's contribution to contemporary English Literature as well as the pleasure he gave to millions of readers all over the world throughout different generations.

All those analyses reveal that there is really an uncertainty about the real literary worth of Maugham's works as well as a precise definition of his importance and position in contemporary English literature. The appreciation of his works by many readers with a critical sensibility, as Calder points out, and by a few major critics (in England), as Maugham himself asserts, reveal that after all he was not just a mere potboiler. On the other hand, depending on the perspective taken, one will not really put him side by side with some of his contemporaries like James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. The truth is that the importance and worth of his works can only be perceived if one looks at them from the right perspective. This, as we shall demonstrate, is the perspective of the great and varied reception Maugham's works always had. A perspective that could reveal their real literary worth which was not necessarily of the same nature of that of modernist works.

An incapacity or indisposition to try a different approach is what seems to have characterized the analyses of the great majority of critics and reviewers of Maugham's works. At least, this is the impression his scholars (and, naturally, fans at the same time) leave. In accepting their view, we have to admit that, instead of a serious and impartial approach, those critics chose to do their work based on an image of Maugham which was formed at some point in the past and that they were afraid (or unable) to question. Thus, in their analyses they were just following a pre-established formula. Throughout the years, they were unwilling to approach Maugham's production from a different perspective and try a truly impartial and fair assessment of it. Together with that, Maugham's scholars point out that a personal animosity towards him also influenced the evaluation of his works. Thus, whatever Maugham published was meant to be disparaged by the majority of critics.

So, we inevitably have to face the question: were those critics impartial in their evaluation or really prejudice-driven? Whatever the answer, it is obvious that they greatly contributed to the perpetuation of an indefiniteness of Maugham's literary worth and position in the contemporary literature of his country.

This peculiar situation of Maugham brings to mind an assertion by the American critic Adena Rosmarin. In an article where she applies an audience-oriented approach to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, she says, "if methodologies are instruments for reading literary texts, so also are literary texts instruments for reading methodologies."¹⁰ Rosmarin supports the notion that some literary texts seem to be especially adequate to specific kinds of

approach. In the development of her article, she argues that Conrad's novel works perfectly as an instrument for reading reader-response criticism.

Now, we can also use Rosmarin's viewpoint in our study of Maugham's literary career although in this case we are not dealing with a specific work but rather with the position he holds in contemporary English literature. This also constitutes a perfect case to be analyzed under an audience-oriented criticism.

However, audience-oriented criticism is not a unified literary school of criticism with a well-defined set of principles. As Susan Suleiman reveals in her Introduction to *The Reader In The Text*¹¹, there are several varieties of audience-oriented criticism. Actually, she points out six main varieties within this school. In principle, we can say that any of them could be used to carry out an analysis of Maugham's literary career. However, there is no doubt that, since we are especially concerned with his relationship with the critics and reviewers, the so-called Sociological and Historical variety is the most adequate for this intended analysis.

Now, out of the sociological and historical audience-oriented theories, one stands out as especially suitable to an analysis of Maugham's situation. This is the aesthetics of reception developed by the German theorist Hans Robert Jauss. In his theory, Jauss develops two concepts that are especially important and adequate to the understanding of Maugham's situation, namely the horizon of expectations and the aesthetic distance that will be better discussed in the following chapter.

In this work, instead of studying a specific work of Maugham's, it is our objective to analyze this peculiar and ambiguous position that he holds in the literature of his country. Obviously, this analysis will be based on Jauss's theory that is presented and briefly discussed in the Theoretical Chapter, the first one of this work.

In the following three chapters, the reception of some novels by Maugham will be individually analyzed. Of course, a complete research would involve the reception of all of his novels. However, their large number makes this task exceed the objective of this work. Thus, we will be limited to the analysis of only six of them, approaching two in each chapter.

Our choice of the novels was not a random one. First of all, as one of our criteria we have decided to hold as much as possible to Maugham's viewpoint expressed in the epigraph

that opens this chapter. With this notion in mind, we have picked up the two best known and best appreciated novels from each of the three phases of his literary life.

In *Maugham – A Reappraisal*, John Whitehead delimits the period of these phases¹². The first is a period of apprenticeship and involves the first twenty years of his writing life. From this period we have selected *Liza of Lambeth* (1897), for being his first novel, and the one which soon after its publication would be considered by many as a modern classic, *Of Human Bondage*, published in 1915.

Maugham's second phase is considered the one of his highest achievements and coincides chronologically with the period *l'entre deux guerres*. The two novels we have chosen from this period are *The Moon and Sixpence* (1919) and *Cakes and Ale* (1930).

Finally, from his last literary phase we have chosen one of his best known works, *The Razor's Edge* (1944). This is a novel that has had a long-standing success and received at least two adaptations to the cinema. Then, we chose *Catalina* (1948), the novel Maugham wrote to close his career as a novelist.

After analyzing the reception of each one of these novels, we come to the Conclusion Chapter. Here, we make generalizations about the critics' reception of Maugham's novels and analyze the validation of Jauss's theory to explain the situation of a writer like Maugham's.

NOTES:

¹ Karl G. Pfeiffer, *W. Somerset Maugham – A Candid Portrait* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1958).

² Pfeiffer 51-52.

³ Maugham wrote 29 plays from 1902 to 1933, when he decided to stop writing drama. Several of his plays had a run of more than 200 performances. *Our Betters* (1917), when performed in London in 1923 and 1924, ran for 548 performances. This is the way John Whitehead evaluates Maugham's importance to contemporary English drama:

Regarding Maugham's status as a playwright, [J.I.M.] Stewart wrote in his Introduction [to *Eight Modern Writers* (1963)] that he "carried on from Jones and Pinero the tradition of the efficient theatrical piece at a decent level of intelligence and literary craft"; but this, while

true of the melodramas, seems to ignore Maugham's major contribution to English drama, his comedies. In placing his plays in their historical context it is more appropriate to show Maugham as one of the four dramatists whose work may be said to have dominated the London stage during the first half of the twentieth century: Shaw (born 1856), Barrie (born 1860), Maugham (born 1874) and Coward (born 1899). In John Whitehead, *Maugham – A Reappraisal* (London: Vision and Barnes & Nobel, 1987) 208.

⁴ W. Somerset Maugham, *On Literature*, (London: The New English Library Limited, 1967) 103.

⁵ Richard Cordell, *Somerset Maugham - A Biographical and Critical Study*, (London: Heinemann, 1961) 207-233.

⁶ Anthony Curtis and John Whitehead, *W. Somerset Maugham – The Critical Heritage*, (London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987) 16.

⁷ Robert Calder, *W. Somerset Maugham & The Quest for Freedom*, (London: Heinemann, 1972).

⁸ Curtis and Whitehead 1-18.

⁹ W. Somerset Maugham, *The Summing Up* (1938. New York: The New American Library, 1956).

¹⁰ Adena Rosmarin. "Darkening the Reader: Reader-Response Criticism and Heart of Darkness," in *Heart of Darkness – A Case Study in Contemporary Criticism*, ed. Ross C. Murfin (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989) 167.

¹¹ Susan Suleiman, "Varieties of Audience-Oriented Criticism" in *The Reader in the Text*, ed. Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crossman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980) 3-45.

¹² John Whitehead, *Maugham – A Reappraisal* (London: Vision and Barnes & Nobel, 1987)13.

JAUSS'S AESTHETICS OF RECEPTION

Many an author has consoled himself for the neglect of his contemporaries by a confidence that posterity will recognise his merits. It seldom does. Posterity is busy and careless and, when it concerns itself with the literary production of the past, makes its choice among those that were successful in their own day. It is only by a remote chance that a dead author is rescued from the obscurity in which he languished during his lifetime.

(W. Somerset Maugham)

The above epigraph works nicely as an introduction to the discussion of the aesthetics of reception. In this case, it fits in even more perfectly insofar as it is an assertion by W. Somerset Maugham, whose works and literary reputation we intend to analyze based on that theory. However, as we shall see later, Maugham's conceptions are not entirely in accordance with the principles of the aesthetics of reception. Before getting properly into the presentation of that theory, let us see a few facts about its position in contemporary literary criticism.

The analysis of the reception of the works of a writer entails the use of a method or approach which is necessarily reader-oriented. As the name itself suggests, this kind of approach sees the reader (or any kind of audience) as fundamental to the evaluation of a literary text as well as the definition of its meanings.

Although the schools within contemporary literary criticism that are reader-oriented began to appear just about three decades ago, there has always been an interest in the figure of the reader since the classical times.¹ The renewal of this interest in the reader in our time began in the late 60's with the so-called Group of Constance, in the former West Germany, and was basically constituted by professors and researchers of the German university whose name they borrow.

The appearance of this group is commonly associated with the changes that took place in the 60's in different areas of life. Regina Zilberman, in *Estética da Recepção e História da Literatura*, associates the development of the aesthetics of reception with the social, intellectual, and cultural movements of that decade.² In a similar way, Susan Suleiman, in her introduction to *The Reader in the Text*, which is entitled "Varieties of Audience-Oriented Criticism," situates this recent interest in the reader's response as part of a general trend in the human sciences (History, Sociology, Psychology, Linguistics, Anthropology) as well as in the traditional humanistic disciplines of Philosophy, Rhetoric, and Aesthetics.³

One of the effects of this new trend on the literary studies was the rise of a demand for a new approach to the traditional ways of studying literary history. It is in this context that Hans Robert Jauss, one of the main exponents of the above-mentioned Group of Constance, will propose his aesthetics of reception.

Jauss's theory deals basically with the proposal of a new literary history based on an aesthetics of reception. When it was first publicly presented, in an inaugural class in 1967, at the University of Constance, he already criticized the role that was attributed to the reader in traditional literary approaches. Concentrating his attacks especially on the formalist and Marxist approaches, he says about the reader's role in them:

Their methods conceive the *literary fact* within the closed circle of an aesthetics of production and representation. In doing so, they deprive literature of a dimension that inalienably belongs to its aesthetic character as well as to its social function: the dimension of its reception and influence. Reader, listener, and spectator – in short, the factor of the audience – play an extremely limited role in both literary theories.⁴

Thus, the reader and the way he receives and is influenced by the literary work becomes central to Jauss's proposal of an aesthetics of reception and influence.

Before moving on into a closer look at the content of Jauss's theory, it is important to dwell a little upon the meaning of the word *reception* as it is used here insofar as it is quite revealing of what Jauss's concept involves. A very precise and brief definition of the way reception is used by the members of the Group of Constance is given by Zilberman. In her book, she defines reception as "the welcome received by a work at the time of its release and throughout history. In a way, it concerns the work's vitality, verifiable for its capacity to keep in dialog with its public"⁵ (my translation). Thus, we can see that this conception does not refer to reception as an individual act but, rather, as a collective one. In other words, the

aesthetics of reception does not deal with the individual's psychological processes which take place when interacting with the literary text. It is interested in its acceptance and influence over the reading public from the moment of its appearance onwards. Obviously, it is not supposed that this reception is necessarily positive as it is semantically suggested by the English word *welcome*.

The bulk of Jauss's theory is to solve the problem of literary history which, in his view, was left unresolved by the Marxists and by the Formalists. His aim is to bridge the gap between literature and history, between a historical and an aesthetic approach. For Jauss, Marxism and Formalism's failure consists in approaching the *literary fact* from only the production and representational perspectives. By doing so, they ignore the dimension of literature's reception and influence. This is the dimension which, according to Jauss, belongs to literature's aesthetic character as well as its social function. By concentrating on this dimension of literature's reception and influence, the reader, as stated before, acquires a role whose importance was not recognized by the Marxists and the Formalists. For Jauss, these methods lack not only the reader in his genuine role which, in his words, is to be "the addressee for whom the literary work is primarily destined,"⁶ but also the capacity to bridge the gap between literature and history.

Jauss is rather specific about what he means by a reader. A reader is essentially the person who is interacting with the literary work regardless of any academic knowledge he might or might not have of literature. Thus, a critic, a writer or a literary historian are all at the same level with any ordinary reader when interacting with a literary work. Certainly, Jauss is not denying that each one of these categories will have a specific kind of reaction to a literary work. However, the nature of the process that takes place when one is reading is always the same.

The reader is seen by Jauss as fundamental to the existence of the literary work. His importance is equal to that of the author and the work themselves. In this aspect, the reader is not seen as just taking a passive role in this process of interaction. It is rather "an energy of formative history." And he still adds: "The historical life of a literary work is unthinkable without the active participation of its addressees."⁷ In other words, we can say that the reader is as important as an author to give life to a literary work. Actually, the life story of the literary work would end with its author in time and space if there were not the presence of the

reader. Thus, with such important role in the reading process, it is more than fair that the reader should be taken into consideration in an aesthetic evaluation of a literary work.

It should be noticed that for Jauss the reader's importance in relation to the work goes as far as the definition of its aesthetic value. It is through the reader that a change will occur from established aesthetic norms to new ones that surpass them. In this way, this relationship acquires an evaluative character. The first reception of a work will determine its aesthetic value in comparison with previous works with which the reader is already familiar. Implicit here is the notion that it is the innovative aspect of a new work that will determine its aesthetic value.

Besides this aesthetic implication, Jauss points out that there is also a historical one in the relationship between the literary work and the reader. This historical implication is constituted by the fact that to the understanding of the first reader will be added the understanding of future generations of readers. Thus, the reception of a literary work can be seen as a cumulative process which begins with its first generation of readers and continues with the additional reception given to the same work by future generations of readers.

In formulating this theory, Jauss acknowledges some influence from other schools of criticism. Those are the Prague linguistic Circle, Russian Formalism, and Czech structuralism. Here, it is worth noting that, on the other hand, there is no affinity between Jauss's ideas and French structuralism because of the latter's defense of the text's autonomy in relation to the reader. Another very important influence was Hans George Gadamer, Jauss's former professor and author of *Truth and Method*, which contains the basis of Jauss's theory.

Jauss's proposal for a new literary history is composed of seven theses which, in her study of his theory, Zilberman divides into two groups. According to her, his first four theses have the characteristic of premises whereas the last three are methodological.⁸

In his first thesis Jauss asserts the necessity of an aesthetics of reception and influence, if a renewal of literary history is really to happen. In his understanding the historicity of literature rests on a dialectical relationship between text and reader. This means to abandon the traditional aesthetics of production and representation. For Jauss, this traditional aesthetics denies "the artistic character as well as the specific historicity of literature."⁹ This negation of the artistic character of literature happens because its dynamism is not taken into consideration. We should remember that for Jauss each reader or each

reading community has a peculiar interaction with the literary text, which changes throughout time. To ignore this changing process means to ignore the artistic character as well as the historicity of literature. Thus, the literary work is renewed by each new generation.

In face of this view of the literary work as being under a constant renewal by each new generation of readers, Jauss cannot accept literary history as “an organization of *literary facts* that is established *post festum*.”¹⁰ In accordance with the dynamism he attributes to the literary experience, Jauss proposes a different definition to literary history:

History of literature is a process of aesthetic reception and production that takes place in the realization of literary texts on the part of the receptive reader, the reflective critic, and the author in his continuing productivity.¹¹

With this definition Jauss means to emphasize the eventful character of a work of art in direct opposition to the matter-of-factness of the traditional methods.

However, as it is implicit in Jauss’s definition of literary history, this eventful character of a literary work does not have an existence of its own. It will depend on the will of future readers to interact with it. In this way, the eventful character of a literary work takes place basically on the horizon of expectations of those future readers, critics, and authors who decide to experience that work again.

A notion of what constitutes the horizon of expectations of a reader is presented in Jauss’s second thesis. In his own words, it is “an objectifiable system of expectations that arises for each work in the historical moment of its appearance, from a pre-understanding of the genre, from the form and themes of already familiar works, and from the opposition between poetic and practical language.”¹² Putting this definition in other words, Maria Marta L. Pereira Oliveira says that the horizon of expectations is a “system of rules and attitudes which characterizes a reader or a reading public at a specific historical moment. This system of rules allows the reader to concretize the meaning of a text based on the characteristics of the work itself”¹³ (my translation). What we have, then, is that no work is ever received in an aesthetic vacuum. Any reading public receiving a new literary work will inevitably do so with a background or, using Jauss’s terminology, a horizon of expectations, which will determine its interaction with that literary work.

In Jauss’s view, the horizon of expectations of a certain reading public, or even of a single reader in different moments of his life, keeps changing. This change is partly provoked

by the literary work itself. In fact, in Jauss's view a good work is the one that has a participation in the changing process of the horizon of expectations in which it appears. In other words, this implies that a good literary work is supposed to be innovative in relation to the predominant aesthetics of its time.

However, it should be noticed that this innovation has to respect certain limits. If it does not pay any respect to the expectations of its contemporary readers, it runs the risk of, instead of being innovative, not establishing communication with them at all. Conversely, if the literary work respects its readers' expectations too much, this will lead to a stagnant relationship between them, leading to what Jauss calls "culinary" literature, i.e., the kind of literature only meant to entertain its readers. So, what we have is that a good literary work is the one that breaks with the values of its readers' horizon of expectations. Nonetheless, this breaking should not be too radical. The innovative character of the new work should add to the communication established with its reading public, not destroy it, for innovation depends on communication to express itself.

Still in his second thesis, Jauss proposes an explanation for the way in which those innovative works establish a communication with their reader in order to make themselves acceptable to their public. He says that

a literary work, even when it appears to be new, does not present itself as something absolutely new in an informational vacuum, but predisposes its audience to a very specific kind of reception by announcements, overt and covert signals, familiar characteristics, or implicit allusions. It awakens memories of that which was already read, brings the reader to a specific emotional attitude, and with its beginning arouses expectations for the "middle and end," which can then be maintained intact or altered, reoriented, or even fulfilled ironically in the course of the reading according to specific rules of the genre or type of text.¹⁴

In other words, what Jauss says is that the new literary work, in order to establish communication with its reading public and at the same time keep its innovative characteristics, has to go halfway to meet its readers and give them signals as to the way to be followed to apprehend its meaning.

This notion that the innovative literary work has "to go halfway" in order to establish communication with its contemporary reader makes us deduce that implied in Jauss's conception is the idea that the reader, not as an individual but, rather, as a member of a reading public, can exert some kind of influence on the production of a literary work.

Although in an indirect way, his expectations will have to be taken into consideration by the author in the moment of creation, if he really wants his work to establish communication with its readers. Again, it should be emphasized that the way the author deals with his reader's expectations will determine the quality of his work. By merely satisfying all his readers' expectations, he will be producing just a "culinary" work which, as the name suggests, is for easy consumption. Now, a different process occurs when the work is innovative and still manages to establish communication with its reading public. This will imply a change in the horizon of expectations of its time.

In its application to a literary work, Jauss's concept of horizon of expectations works on two aspects: a formal and an evaluative one. In the formal aspect, as the definition itself reveals, it helps in the determination of the work's genre, theme, and language. In its evaluative aspect, it offers a set of criteria to the evaluation of the literary merits of a text. The quality of the artistic character of a certain work will be determined by the kind and intensity of its influence on its reading public.

The way this influence takes place is discussed by Jauss in his next thesis which has as its main issue the notion of aesthetic distance. By aesthetic distance he understands "the disparity between the given horizon of expectations and the appearance of a new work (...)"¹⁶ Like the the horizon of expectations, the aesthetic distance can be historically objectified. Insofar as the reception of a new work can result in a change of horizons, the objectification of the aesthetic distance will be traced along the spectrum of the reading public's reactions and criticism's judgment. More specifically, this means the spontaneous success, rejection or shock, scattered approval, gradual or belated understanding a work might provoke.

The aesthetic distance also works as an evaluative criterion. For Jauss, the aesthetic distance between the horizon of expectations and the new work will determine its aesthetic value. The horizontal change which is necessary to the reception of a new work will be the determinant factor of its artistic character. On the other hand, if there is no aesthetic distance in the reception of a new work, or if it is minimum, this work belongs to the sphere of "culinary" or entertainment art. It merely fulfills the expectations of its first audience, whether aesthetic or moral.

Jauss foresees that the aesthetic distance which is experienced by the first readers will not exist for future generations of readers. The original negativity of the work becomes

self-evident and a familiar part of the horizon of expectations of future generations. Obviously, this is what happens to the so-called masterpieces. Their original beautiful and innovative form become, as time goes by, some kind of commonplace experience. The only solution Jauss points out in this case is to endeavor a special effort in order to read the masterpieces 'against the grain' of the accustomed experience. This is the only way to recover the artistic character of the masterpieces.

It is still within his presentation of the concept of aesthetic distance that Jauss will explain the belated success of some works. In his view, some works break through their contemporary horizon of expectations so completely that no communication can be established with their first generation of readers. Only when the new horizon of expectations has achieved a greater audience, that work will have its artistic character recognized. Jauss himself gives an example of this which he takes from French Literature. At the same time that Gustave Flaubert published *Madame Bovary*, another writer, Ernest Feydeau, published a novel called *Fanny* with a similar theme. For breaking with the aesthetic conventions of its time, Flaubert's novel did not have immediately the same success that Feydeau's did. However, as time went by *Madame Bovary* had its innovative character and literary merits recognized and found its way into a classic status whereas *Fanny*, after its initial success, fell into oblivion.

After this presentation of the concept of aesthetic distance, in his next thesis Jauss again deals with the notion of horizon of expectations. Here he exposes the result of a reconstruction of the horizon of expectations of a work. This reconstruction allows the determination of the questions to which the text gave an answer. Consequently this determination also allows the discovery of the way the contemporary reader viewed and understood the work.

Jauss points out the advantages of this approach. First of all, it allows the recognition of the norms that guided either a classicist or modernizing understanding of art. Consequently, this means not to recur to a general "spirit of the age." Another advantage of this approach concerns the different understandings of a work. It makes clear the hermeneutic differences the understanding of a work had when it first appeared and its current one. It also reveals the history of the work's reception which mediates those two different understandings.

Exemplifying the applicability of this approach, Jauss asserts that “the method of historical reception is indispensable for the understanding of literature from the distant past.”¹⁶ For instance, this would be the case of a work whose author is unknown, “his intent undeclared, and his relationship to sources and models only indirectly accessible”¹⁷. To have the best possible understanding of this text in terms of its intention and time, one should necessarily foreground it against those works which the author assumes his contemporary audiences knew. These assumptions, it should be noticed, are present in the text itself. They can be identified through hints left in it by the author.

The implications of the reconstruction of the horizon of expectations are still discussed in Jauss’s fourth thesis. For him, by reconstructing the horizon of expectations in which a work appeared and was received, it is possible to determine the questions to which the work is an answer. Besides, it also reveals the difference between the understanding a work had at first and its present one. Consequently, the history of its reception is also more evident. Finally, this approach brings into question two apparently self-evident claims which are taken as platonizing dogma of philological metaphysics. The first of these claims is that literature is eternally present in the literary text. The second claim is that once the objective meaning of the literary text is determined, it becomes immediately accessible to the interpreter at all times.

Jauss understands that in his work the author always leaves indications of what he knows or assumes that his readers know. Thus, confronting the work under analysis with those works indicated in it, it will be possible to raise the questions to which it is an answer and determine the reasons for the way it was received.

As the horizon of expectations is always changing, the questions that, in a way, originated a work also change. In face of this, there remains the question of how to evaluate a work from the past: based on those original questions or on those of our contemporary life? It is clear that, in accordance with his theory, what Jauss sides with is a history of the different questions to which the work worked as an answer throughout its life story.

Up to the fourth thesis, Jauss deals only with the individual work and the historical evolution of its reception. In his fifth thesis he discusses the work within a specific literary context or, to use his terminology, within a “literary series.” The approach of an individual work within a literary series allows the recognition of its historical position and significance

in terms of the literary experience it provides. The bulk of Jauss's discussion here is how a literary work which, in accordance with the traditional approaches, has already become a *literary fact* can become an *event* again. In other words, how can it establish a relationship with a new generation completely different from the original reading public for which it was written.

Jauss presents his point of view on this problem backgrounding it against the formalist concept of literary evolution. According to this formalist conception, after reaching its highest point of influence, an innovative work begins a decline towards an end point. Furthermore, with their theory the formalists eliminate the problem of the criterion because this would be the new form in the literary series.

Actually, Jauss means his thesis as an answer to the traditional criticism the formalist method has received which, in his words, is the fact that the "mere opposition or aesthetic variation does not suffice to explain the growth of literature; the question of the direction of change of literary forms remains unanswerable; innovation for itself does not alone make up artistic character; and the connection between literary evolution and social change does not vanish from the face of the earth its mere negation."¹⁸ As an answer to these criticisms Jauss proposes that the dimension of historical experience should also be added to the formalist method. This also means the inclusion of the historical standpoint of the present observer, that is, the literary historian.

The historical standpoint of the present observer will solve the problem of mediation between old and new forms. With his present view, the observer will be able to determine the problem left behind by the old form to which the new one is an answer. This mediation, according to Jauss, can only be established within the present horizon of the received work.

Founding the study of "literary evolution" on a reception theory means to liberate the work of necessarily having an impact and influence on the first generation of readers. It might happen that at a first moment the work has not its significance apprehended and thus may not have its artistic character perceived and only future generations of readers will be able to do it. In this way the new is seen as not only an aesthetic category but also as a historical one. It becomes so when a diachronic analysis of literature is used to determine the moment in which the new in a work is finally recognized as really new.

Moving to Jauss's sixth thesis, we see that here he discusses how the aesthetics of reception will help to determine the system of relationships specific of the literature of a certain moment and the articulation of the different systems that were determined.

To begin with, Jauss proposes that, like in linguistic studies, literary history should also be approached from a synchronic perspective. The procedure would consist in a synchronic cross-section of a moment in the literary development and, then, to arrange the contemporaneous works in equivalent opposing and hierarchical structures. This arrangement would allow the discovery of an overarching system of relationships in the literature of a specific historical moment. The next step would consist in further cross-section diachronically before and after that first moment. This cross-section should then be arranged so as to articulate historically the change in literary structures in its epoch-making moments. This final arrangement of cross-sections would allow the development of the principle of representation of a new literary history.

In terms of a specific work, this procedure means an analysis of that work in relation to its contemporaries in the moment of its appearance. In a second analysis of its reception, it will be done in relation to its contemporaries, including those new works which appeared later. This procedure respects the recipients' perspective for whom a work is contemporaneous not only with those already existent in its first moment of appearance but also with others that will appear later.

In Jauss's view, such a procedure implies the concealment of the "actual noncontemporaneity of the contemporaneous"¹⁹. In other words, he means that all works are seen in the light of the significance of the moment of its appearance. It is not taken into consideration that not all works necessarily bear the contemporaneity of their own time. Still putting this in different words, we can say that the works are not seen in their "individuality" but only as part of a predominant contemporaneous literature.

Jauss expresses another reason why he opposes the purely diachronic perspective. The diachronic perspective explains literary phenomena according to the immanent logic of innovation and automatization, problem and solution. It is with this logic that it explains the changes in, for example, the histories of genres. However, this perspective can only be arrived at when the proper historical dimension of literature breaks through the morphological canon. This implies confronting the work that has become important in historical influence with that

which is historically worn-out and also with conventional works of the genre. Besides, it should also take into consideration the work's relationship to the literary milieu in which it appears.

With this procedure, the historicity of literature is revealed in the intersections of diachrony and synchrony. In this sense, the literary horizon of a specific moment is understood as the synchronic system in relation to which contemporaneous literature could be received diachronically in relations of noncontemporaneity. Thus, the work could be received as current or not, modish, outdated, or perennial, premature or belated.

The proposal of this mixture of diachronic and synchronic procedures leads Jauss to a discussion of the relationship between literature and society which constitutes the bulk of his seventh thesis. Here, he asserts that the task of literary history is completed only when it is seen as "special history" in its relationship to "general history." For him, this relationship does not just mean to identify a typified, idealized, satiric, or utopian image of social existence in the literature of all times. Actually, Jauss understands that the social function of literature is really manifested when "the literary experience of the reader enters the horizon of expectations of his lived praxis, preforms his understanding of the world, and thereby also has an effect on his social behavior."²⁰ This effect on one's social behavior happens insofar as "the experience of reading can liberate one from adaptations, prejudices, and predicaments of a lived praxis."²¹ This liberation process will allow the reader a new perception of things which inevitably alters his social behavior.

Comparing the horizon of expectations of literature to that of historical, lived praxis, Jauss points out what differentiates them. He asserts that besides preserving actual experiences, the horizon of expectations of literature "also anticipates unrealized possibility, broadens the limited space of social behavior for new desires, claims, and goals, and thereby opens paths of future experience."²²

Jauss's next step is to explain how the pre-orientation of our experience through the capability of literature operates on our esthetic as well as social perception. As was already asserted, the artistic character in a new form helps one to break through the automatism of everyday perception. Together with this, the artistic function can also make possible a new perception of things. This happens when it preforms the content of a new experience which is first brought to light in the form of literature.

The relationship between literature and reader is not only actualized in the sensorial realm, when it works as an encouragement to aesthetic perception, but also in the ethical realm as a summons to moral reflection. This happens because the new literary work is received and judged also against the background of everyday experience of life. According to the aesthetics of reception this social function in the ethical realm should be grasped by the same means of question and answer, problem and solution.

1. Applying Jauss to Maugham

As we saw, in his proposal of a new literary history, Jauss leaves implicit the necessity of a receptional approach to individual literary works. But what exactly constitutes the reception of a work and how it is manifested are questions left unanswered.

In trying to say what constitutes the reception of a literary work, we can list some subjective as well as objective elements. For instance, a change in the reader's view of life, a change in his moral values, a change in his aesthetic taste, all these could be listed as subjective elements which are part of the reception of a literary work.

Now, as objective (or, perhaps, perceptible) elements of a literary work's reception, we could mention its adaptation to other media, translations to other languages than the original, number of editions and copies sold, influence on other writers and works, etc. In fact, this list could become endless.

However, out of all these elements, the most directly related and certainly the first to come to mind when the subject under discussion is the reception of a literary text was not mentioned. It is the critics and reviewers' reaction to a book when it is first released. Undoubtedly, this is the most concrete and immediate reception a book might receive from its ultimate objective which is the reader.

This, however, does not mean that this kind of reception is more important than that of any other ordinary reader. After all, as we saw, for Jauss, in what concerns the act of reading and the reception of a literary work, there is no value distinction between the interaction of the ordinary readers with a book from that of critics, reviewers and literary historians.

Nonetheless, in spite of this equality in what concerns the act of reading, it should not be wrong to assert that the nature of a critic/reviewer's reception is different from that of an ordinary reader. Because the critic/reviewer deals with literature in a professional manner, his reading of a book is never done merely out of pleasure. He naturally has a professional background with which he will receive that book and will pass a judgment on it.

As a consequence of this professional nature of his interaction with literature, the critic/reviewer's reaction becomes even more significant in the analysis of the reception of a work. As a necessary part of his job he has to be aware of the predominant esthetic values of his time. So, his reaction to a work will have this awareness as its background. Conversely, the ordinary reader, although obviously also influenced by the predominant values of his time, is not aware of them. This, of course, happens regardless of the fact that Jauss puts both of them on the same level of importance when interacting with a literary work.

Another very evident difference between the reception of a critic/reviewer and that of an ordinary reader is that the former leaves his impressions of the literary work registered. The ordinary reader's impression is almost never registered and the influence that the work might have on him will be indirect and will not take place in an immediate and perceptible way. Besides, most of the time this influence is unconscious and also goes unregistered. That's why the critic/reviewer's reaction acquires a great importance in the analysis of the reception of a literary work. For being always registered, it can help determine the innovative or not innovative character of a literary work in the horizon of expectations in which it appears.

Registration, then, is what makes the critics/reviewers' reaction especially important within the realm of reception of a literary work. If carefully analyzed, it can be quite revealing of the trajectory a work will take or has taken in its life history. More than that, it can also reveal the position and importance that a work's author has acquired in the history of his country's literature.

It is, thus, with this understanding that in the following chapters we are going to deal with the reception of some of the works of W. Somerset Maugham by some critics/reviewers. By taking a close look at the first reactions to six of his novels, we will try to define and understand Maugham's position in contemporary English literature.

NOTES:

¹ A panoramic view of the interest in the reader in the history of literary criticism is traced by Adena Rosmarin in her article “Darkening the Reader: Reader-Response Criticism and *Heart of Darkness*,” in *Heart of Darkness – A Case Study in Contemporary Criticism*, (ed.) Ross C. Murfin (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989).

² Regina Zilberman, *Estética da Recepção e História da Literatura* (São Paulo: Editora Ática, 1989).

³ Susan Suleiman, “Varieties of Audience-Oriented Criticism,” *The Reader in the Text* (ed) Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crossman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

⁴ Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994) 18.

⁵ Zilberman 114. In the original: a acolhida alcançada por uma obra à época de seu aparecimento e ao longo da história. Em certo sentido, dá conta de sua vitalidade, verificável por sua capacidade de manter-se em diálogo com o público.

⁶ Jauss 19.

⁷ Jauss 19.

⁸ Zilberman 33.

⁹ Jauss 21.

¹⁰ Jauss 20.

¹¹ Jauss 21.

¹² Jauss 22.

¹³ Maria Marta Laus Pereira Oliveira, *A Recepção Crítica da Obra de Marcel Proust no Brasil*. diss., UFRGS, 1993, 9. In the original: sistema de normas e atitudes que caracterizam um leitor ou um público, num momento histórico preciso. Este sistema de normas permite ao leitor concretizar o sentido do texto a partir de características da própria obra.

¹⁴ Jauss 23.

¹⁵ Jauss 25.

¹⁶ Jauss 28.

¹⁷ Jauss 28.

¹⁸ Jauss 33-34.

¹⁹ Jauss 36.

²⁰ Jauss 39.

²¹ Jauss 41.

²² Jauss 41.

THE RECEPTION OF *LIZA OF LAMBETH* AND OF *HUMAN BONDAGE*

What matters is that, by some idiosyncrasy of nature, the writer is enabled to see in a manner peculiar to himself. It doesn't matter if he sees in a way that common opinion regards as neither just nor true.

(W. Somerset Maugham)

1. In the "dark regions" of the empire where the sun never sets

*Liza of Lambeth*¹, Maugham's first novel, was written when he was twenty-one years old, but it was only published two years later, in 1897. By this time, Maugham had already written another novel that would be called *The Making of a Saint*. The most interesting aspect in analyzing the reception of *Liza of Lambeth* is that it reveals the reaction of the critics to the initial work of a young writer. Besides, as Karl G. Pfeiffer puts it, having been written before Maugham learned his craft, *Liza of Lambeth* is worth examining, since it provides evidence of Maugham's native equipment as a writer².

When *Liza of Lambeth* was first published, Maugham was a medical student at St. Thomas's Hospital in London. In 1895, the year he wrote it, he was in his fourth year and, as part of his course, working as an obstetric clerk in the Lambeth slums. During his term of duty as an obstetric clerk, which lasted three weeks, Maugham attended sixty-three confinements. It was based on this experience that he wrote his first novel.

Indeed, *Liza of Lambeth* was the first novel Maugham wrote, but not his first piece of fiction. Before sending his novel to be appreciated by T. Fisher Unwin, his first publisher, Maugham had sent two short stories, namely, 'Daisy' and 'A Bad Example.'³ They were meant to be included in a series of short books called *The Pseudonym Library*. However, they were returned accompanied by a letter in which Unwin explained they were not long enough

to be included in his series. In this same letter, he also said he would be glad to consider a novel if the young writer had one. It was then that Maugham immediately set out to write his first novel.

After its publication, seven small notes appeared in the following twelve months reviewing *Liza of Lambeth*. In spite of this apparently insignificant number, in his book *The Pattern of Maugham*, the critic Anthony Curtis considers that it was “widely reviewed, remarkably so for a first novel.” But he also suggests that those reviews were articulated by Fisher Unwin who “knew how to push his wares.”⁴

In a way, we can say that the first reception of *Liza of Lambeth* was actually recorded even before its publication. I am referring to the analysis that Fisher Unwin’s readers made of the typescript of *Liza of Lambeth* in order to recommend its publication or rejection. Three readers, namely, Vaughan Nash, W.H. Chesson, and Edward Garnett were in charge of reading the typescript whose original title was still “A Lambeth Idyll.”⁵

Two of those readers recommended the publication of the typescript whereas one advised its rejection.⁶ That was Vaughan Nash. According to Robert Calder, Nash recognized that Maugham showed a familiarity with the speech and customs of the London poor but he did not know how to make a proper use of his knowledge. As for the second reader, still according to Calder, “he recommended publication on the grounds both of artistic merit and moral force.”⁷

However, it seems that it was the recommendation of Garnett, who was, in Calder’s words, “Unwin’s most shrewd and experienced reader,”⁸ that most influenced the publisher’s final decision. All scholars of Maugham’s writing career point out that Garnett’s analysis determined the fate of the typescript and, by extension, also of Maugham as a writer. So, it is not a surprise that Garnett’s analysis is the only one to have deserved a reproduction in critical books on Maugham. Actually, it was the first to be included in a collection of articles on Maugham’s works entitled *W. Somerset Maugham – The Critical Heritage*.⁹

Needless to say that in Garnett’s evaluation of *Liza of Lambeth* what seems to predominate is a concern with the work as a possible commercial success. After all, Fisher Unwin was not interested in promoting art but rather in making money. In this aspect, Garnett’s report seems an omen of the kind of criticism Maugham would have to put up with

throughout his writing career. Critics would often accuse him of being more interested in writing books that could be a commercial success than in producing a work of art.

It is, then, with this commercial perspective in mind that Garnett starts his report by comparing *Liza of Lambeth* with Arthur Morrison's *Tales of Mean Streets* (1895) and *A Child of the Jago* (1896). The reason for this comparison is rather obvious. Apparently, Morrison was the most successful writer within the slum movement. This literary movement, which appeared in English Literature at the end of the Victorian period, had as its main characteristic the description of the life of the inhabitants of what Anthony Curtis calls "the dark regions of the [English] capital."¹⁰ Although it obviously was not his intention, Garnett's comparison between Maugham's novel and those of Morrison has the literary value of already placing *Liza of Lambeth* within a specific segment of English Literature.

In spite of using Morrison's novels as a reference to analyze *Liza of Lambeth* Garnett does not consider it as good as the former. The first part of his report is mostly commercially-oriented. After saying *Liza of Lambeth* is not so powerful a study as *A Child of the Jago*, he reminds Fisher Unwin that Morrison's novel was well received by the intelligent section of the public but that it will probably have to be forced on the ordinary public and the booksellers. Mentioning Morrison's other novel *Tales of the Mean Streets*, he adds that although it brought some return to an investment in advertisement, its publishers know that their payment will be in reputation. So, these comparisons reveal that although Garnett does not consider *Liza of Lambeth* as good as Morrison's novel, he still attributes artistic value to it. In his view, it could please an intelligent public more easily than an ordinary one.

After this comparison with Morrison's novels, Garnett moves into a short analysis of some characteristics of *Liza of Lambeth*. He begins by defining it as a realistic novel. In this sense, he is apparently happy with Maugham's achievements. At a certain moment he says that the novel "is objective, & both the atmosphere & the environment of the mean district are unexaggerated." When speaking about its main character, Liza, and her mother Mrs. Kemp, he says they are depicted "with no little humour and insight." Although he says the story has a dismal ending, its temper and tone are not morbid. Underlying this analysis, one can again easily identify a preoccupation with the public's reception and acceptance of the novel.

Conforming to this assumption, he next considers some strategies to make the novel a success. According to him, the question Fisher Unwin has to face is whether "the Arthur

Morrison public, a slowly growing one, will understand & appreciate [*Liza of Lambeth*]." With such an assertion Garnett reveals a kind of "negotiation," or "manipulation" of reading publics. The new writer is launched aiming at a specific reading public whose expectations he hopes to fulfil together with an already established one. This could be seen as a sharing or appropriation of the other writer's reading public. Apparently, this is a usual practice since Garnett adds that in Morrison's case he could find publisher and public through the support of W.E. Henley, the editor of *National Observer*.

Garnett's clues about these manipulations of reading publics can also be seen as another omen, or an anticipation, of a specific criticism Maugham would have to keep receiving throughout his writing career. This would be his lack of originality and innovation. Garnett's considerations suggest that Maugham's choice of the slum theme for his first novel was a deliberate decision. It was deliberate in the sense that he knew there was a public who would consume more slum novels. In this way, his choice of the slum theme was not just a mere consequence of the personal experience he was living at that moment of his life. On the other hand, still concerning the critics' charge of Maugham's lack of originality and innovation he, as it will shown alter, always refused and was against the literary innovations of his own time.

Towards the end of the same paragraph, Garnett tries to trace what will be the critics' reaction to *Liza of Lambeth*. After asserting that if the novel is rejected by Fisher Unwin, someone else will certainly publish it, he says that "half the critics will call the book 'brutal'." And he still adds to this: "Now it is no good trying half measures – we mean there is a definite public for & against the 'study in realism'." Although here Garnett seems to be saying what is obvious, he is referring specifically to the kind of realism in *Liza of Lambeth*. He is predicting that some people will be shocked by the way the slum people are depicted there. Garnett seems to fear that its "brutal" realism will prevent it from having a favorable reception. On the other hand, his hope for a good reception of it comes from its predominant tone. In this sense, Garnett says that it "is a clever, a humorous, study of rather low life, & that its tone is quite wholesome & the reverse of morbid. Mr Maugham has insight & humour (...)."

Finally, Garnett concludes his report making some suggestions to the book in case it is really taken. Again his main concern here is to make it less shocking and as acceptable as possible to the reading public. Thus, he suggests the reduction of a chapter because it "is too long, & has too much the effect of a piece of clever reporting." He understands there is too

much insistence on “the physical details concerning the dinner & its digestion by A & B.” And also that some of the bad words used should be “softened down or Henleyized a bit – a la *Mean Streets*.” This final reference to *Tales of Mean Streets* reveals again his concern in making Maugham’s novel acceptable to Arthur Morrison’s reading public.

Some of Garnett’s considerations will be coincidentally repeated in the later reviews and criticism on *Liza of Lambeth*. Three of these appeared in the same month of its publication. The first one was in *Academy* in its volume LII of September 11, 1897¹¹.

This review, which was published unsigned, begins by presenting *Liza of Lambeth* as an imitation of Morrison’s work. Unhappily, the reviewer does not specify of which of Morrison’s novels *Liza of Lambeth* is an imitation. Regardless of this, he understands that Maugham makes no effort to disguise his influence from Morrison. For him, “the mimicry, indeed, is deliberate and unashamed” since there are some scenes that are faithful reproductions of some in Morrison’s work.

The reviewer is quite specific in saying why *Liza of Lambeth*, in spite of being an imitation of Morrison’s work, is not as good as the original. According to him, some qualities that make the latter “something akin to genius” are missing in the former. These qualities would be directness, restraint, and dominance of artistic purpose. The lack of these qualities makes Maugham’s work excessively realistic. He fails in pursuing an artistic realism. He criticizes both Maugham’s handling of his principal subject, a factory girl’s seduction, and also Maugham’s inclusion of a pastoral convention to his description of a bank holiday. With these two examples, he means to show Maugham’s failure in dealing with both sad and cheerful events in a realistic way.

However, if the reviewer is not pleased with Maugham’s effort to be realistic, he is quite pleased with his choice of subject. In his view, the seduction of a factory girl by a ‘magerful man’ is a subject “quite capable of serious and artistic treatment” and in the case of Maugham, he recognizes his good knowledge and ability in describing life in the London slum. Unhappily, as he misses artistic qualities in Maugham to make a proper use of his knowledge, he concludes his review leaving the impression that for him *Liza of Lambeth* is closer to a social document than to a work of art.

In the same day of publication of this article in *Academy*, an unsigned review of *Liza of Lambeth* was also published in *The Athenaeum* in a session called “New Novels.”¹²

Apparently, the reviewer was not careful in providing correct information about the novels presented there. He begins his commentary on Maugham's novel with a silly mistake. In the very first sentence he says that in *Liza of Lambeth* "twelve months of the life of a young factory girl living in Lambeth are depicted by Mr. Maugham with uncompromising fidelity and care." In fact, the story covers only the last three months of Liza's life. It goes from "the first Saturday in August," this being the very first sentence of the novel, until an afternoon in November when Liza dies. The reviewer was possibly led into this mistake by the twelve chapters of the novel.

However, this mistake becomes unjustifiable when one considers that there is another important indication of the time span of the story. This is the weather which is used as an element to reflect the phases of Liza and Jim's love affair. As they begin their relationship in the summer, the nice weather works as an extension of their reciprocal infatuation. Later on, in the last three chapters of the novel, the narrator makes constant references to the predominant cold and dreary weather. These references are easily associated with the plight Liza is now undergoing. Besides the deterioration of her relationship with Jim Blakeston, she also has to face the condemnation and contempt of her neighbors, and Mrs. Blakeston's threats. So, had the reviewer paid attention to these details, he would have easily noticed that the season now was winter. This implies that only a very few months had passed since the beginning of the story.

We can only think of two explanations for this kind of neglect. First, it could be attributed to the kind of review itself which is not meant to be a profound analysis of the works presented there. Secondly, it could have to do with the fact that Maugham was just publishing his first novel and was, of course, completely unknown to the reading public and the literary critics. Thus, he would not be considered as deserving much attention.

In spite of this apparently superficial reading, Maugham's inappropriate use of words did not escape the attention of the reviewer. After defining Maugham's language as "unvarnished," he warns "readers who prefer not to be brought into contact with some of the ugliest words and phrases" that Maugham's novel is not for them. This criticism reveals that Garnett was right in his evaluation of the book's language. Besides, it also reveals that his advice was only partially taken by Fisher Unwin, if so.

In what concerns the realism of the novel, *The Athenaeum* reviewer shares the opinion of his counterpart in *Academy*. He first says he likes it for showing “life as it is.” As the best example of this he points out the last scene of the novel in which Liza dies while her mother and a midwife are drinking and discussing the merits of rival undertakers, and the girl’s life insurance. However, he misses literary quality in this kind of realism. That’s why in a very unexpected way he concludes his review saying that “*Liza of Lambeth* is emphatically unpleasing as literature.” We can suppose, then, that like the *Academy* reviewer, he sees Maugham’s first novel as being more a social document than a piece of fiction.

The third review of *Liza of Lambeth* still in its month of publication appeared in *The Daily Telegraph* on September 22¹³. The review, a very unfavorable one, was published in a column also called *New Novels* and does not come signed. The reviewer starts speaking about *Liza of Lambeth* as if it were based on a true story. The first two sentences of his review say: “Liza of Lambeth was a factory-girl in that salubrious quarter. Her deeds live after her, for she has given her name to a book which is both frankly indecent and genuinely pathetic.” It is impossible to know here whether the reviewer means to be ironical or if he was carried by Maugham’s realism which, like the two previous reviewers, he so severely condemns. After all, there is no reference or indication from Maugham that his first novel was based on a true story, but rather on his observations of the life in slums when he was a medical student.

Like the other reviewers, *The Daily Telegraph* reviewer sees Maugham as an imitator of Morrison whose realism he is not successful in copying. In his view, Maugham’s realism could not have gone further. Needless to say that he does not mean to praise it with that assertion. However, the reviewer refrains from an overt condemnation of Maugham’s style. He seems to be aware that the story told in *Liza of Lambeth*, although shocking and even repulsive, is based on facts that happen in the London slums every day. In this sense, he leaves to the reader to decide whether Maugham used vulgarity when approaching his theme.

Although it is obvious that *The Daily Telegraph* reviewer’s ulterior intention is to influence his readers not to read *Liza of Lambeth*, he never claims it as entirely unworthy reading or asks for its banishment. He seems to assume the point of view according to which the writer should be free to write whatever he wants. The only constraint upon him should be exerted by all the parts involved in the production and reception of the literary work. In this sense, he says that

the student of human nature in all its outcrops is no longer accustomed to have his text-books revised by the ecclesiastical authorities. The responsibility, therefore, rests entirely with authors and publishers in the first instance, and with the public afterwards.

Sentences like this seem to suggest that the reviewer takes *Liza of Lambeth* as an unquestionably immoral, or perhaps, amoral book. Giving continuity to his reasoning, he says: "If these unhappy people – the poorest of the poor – are to be pictured at all, it is, perhaps, worth the reader's while to divest himself for a moment of his civilization for the sake of receiving a true impression."

However, taking a look at Liza's fate we can come to an entirely different conclusion. For breaking the moral code of her community, Liza is duly punished. When her love affair with a married man, Jim Blakeston, becomes public, she is gradually punished. First, she is despised by her friends and neighbours. Then, she is severely beaten by her lover's wife, Mrs. Blakeston. Finally, as a consequence of that she has a miscarriage and dies. There seems to be no doubt that, in accordance with the morality of her community she received what she deserved. This sense of justice and morality should not be that different from the public's values.

So, the question still remains: what could be so disturbing about *Liza of Lambeth* for *The Daily Telegraph* reviewer? It seems that the answer is in the reviewer's assertion that the reader should "divest himself for a moment of his civilization" in order to appreciate *Liza of Lambeth*. If we take the word *civilization* in the sense of "refinement of manner," we can conclude that he was shocked and horrified with the description of the slum people. They are excessively spontaneous, cheerful, and insensitive. There is no formality in their social relations. Thus, Maugham's novel works as an unpleasant reminder to the civilized Londoner that there were "dark regions" in the English capital.

Intentionally or not, this social aspect of *Liza of Lambeth* was overlooked by its contemporary English reviewers. However, when the novel was reprinted in the United States several years later, in 1921, an article appeared in the edition of October 19 of *The New Republic* in which its author, Francis Hackett, makes a point of approaching it¹⁴. In the very beginning of the review, he says about Maugham's first novel:

It crosses the Thames of combed and curried London to plunge into the jungle of Lambeth. At one end of Westminster Bridge you have an educated England of subtleties and reticences, of refinement and elision. At the other

end you face this primitive, shameless, raw, naked England, this Shakespearian unexpurgated land of savory speech, brutal candor and warm desire. Here hardly less than in the seventeenth century you have the England so disguised in low comedy but really something so natural, so pungent, so powerfully human, that it can hardly be put into print.

Certainly, it was this England that in the reviewer's viewpoint would be "uncivilized" to depict. Indeed, to make things worse, this "uncivilized" England reminds the other one that they are in fact the same. In Maugham's novel, this happens more explicitly towards its end, in the dialogue between Liza and her mother, after the former's fight with Mrs. Blakeston. Then, Mrs. Kemp says:

'I've 'ad thirteen children an' I'm proud of it. As your poor dear father used ter sy, it shows as 'ow one's got the blood of a Briton in one. Your poor dear father, 'e was a great 'and at speakin' 'e used ter speak at parliamentary meetin's – I really believe 'e d'ave been a member of Parliament if 'e'd been alive now. Well, as I was sayin', your father 'e used ter sy, "None of your small families for me, I don't approve of them," says 'e. 'E was a man of very 'igh principles, an' by politics 'e was a Radical. "No," says 'e, when 'e got talkin', "when a man can 'ave a family raisin' into double figures, it shows 'e's got the backbone of a Briton in 'im. That's the stuff as 'as built up England's nime and glory! When one thinks of the mighty British Hempire," says 'e, "on which the sun never sets from mornin' till night, one 'as ter be proud of 'isself, an' one 'as ter do one's duty in thet walk of life in which it 'as pleased Providence ter set one – an' every man's fust duty is ter get as many children as 'e bloomin' well can."¹⁵

Thus, *Liza of Lambeth* uncomfortably reminds *The Daily Telegraph* reviewer that places like Lambeth, where the sun seems to refuse to rise, are also part of the empire where the sun never sets.

Still in September, another review of *Liza of Lambeth* appeared, this time in the edition of the 21th of *The Manchester Guardian*¹⁶. In this unsigned article, the reviewer analyzes Maugham's novel based on what he considers will be the reader's feeling by the end of the novel. In his view, when finishing reading *Liza of Lambeth* he will be feeling a "repugnance almost amounting to nausea" but, at the same time, he will be also feeling spellbound. The reason for the reader's nausea is to be found in the realism used by Maugham. For the reviewer, Maugham's realism is "undiluted" and "almost unbearable." Actually, in what concerns this aspect of *Liza of Lambeth*, the reviewer compares it to a "vulgar chronicle." However, something results from this shocking kind of realism. In spite of its nauseating aspect, it produces in the reader the sense that the characters and the actions they live are real.

Actually, "a real character" is what the reviewer calls Liza in whom he acknowledges "the magnetic charm that makes the girl popular among her friends." Although he does not say it explicitly, apparently it is the drawing of Liza that will cause the feeling of spellbound to linger on in the reader's mind after finishing reading the novel. In this way, for her personality Liza is responsible for the enthralling aspect of the novel whereas the situations she lives are to provoke nausea. Certainly more nauseating than any action of Liza's is the conversation between her mother and the midwife at her deathbed. For the reviewer, "a more strangely moving scene [...] has seldom been penned."

In spite of this apparent condemnation of Maugham's realism, the reviewer ends up acknowledging the style adopted by him as necessarily adequate to the story told. In his words, it "is emphatically not milk for babes, but if it had to be written at all it could hardly have been written in any other way."

Although for a different reason, a feeling of discomfort with the theme of Maugham's novel is also what predominates in the next review of *Liza of Lambeth*. This was published in the October edition of *The Bookman*, in a session called *Novel Notes*¹⁷.

Like Garnett's report, this review is interesting for the way its author places *Liza of Lambeth* within a literary line. In a very broad way, the reviewer begins by talking about the ways vivisection is approached, i.e., it has its advocates, its objectors, and a between-class of those who "would fain limit physical suffering so that an experiment once made should be carefully recorded and never repeated." This is the attitude the reviewer will assume in relation to *Liza of Lambeth*. Before that, however, he develops better his argument by talking about two other writers and one of their works, namely, Zola's *Germinal* and Arthur Morrison's *A Child of the Jago*. He says readers cannot deny to these two writers the right to say what they do in their novels "because whether they speak the whole truth or not, they do speak truth, which is more respectable than telling sentimental lies." However, he understands that when a certain "black truth," to use his words, is repeated too often it palls. This is what is happening, in his view, to the slum theme in literature. It is losing its effect because it has become "daily food." So, this is the way he sees *Liza of Lambeth* in the literary context in which it appears. Certainly, had it appeared before, it would have had a different reception and caused a different impression.

Although *The Bookman* reviewer, like the reviewer in *The Daily Telegraph*, is not pleased with the theme developed by Maugham, they are so for different reasons. As we could see above, *The Daily Telegraph* reviewer rejects the slum theme out of a sense of dignity. He seems revolted to be reminded that people like Liza and her neighbors exist and live so near him. As for *The Bookman* reviewer, he only thinks the theme has already become hackneyed.

In spite of pointing Maugham's failure in choosing his theme and also his excessive use of bad language, the reviewer still considers him a clever and promising writer. He closes his review expressing his wishes that Maugham "should be heard of again – in other scenes, let us hope," he says.

A similar belief in Maugham's capacity to do better in the future, if he deals with another theme, is expressed by the reviewer of *Literature*. This review, which was published on November 11, 1897, begins saying: "Only one circumstance induces us to notice this most unpleasant book, and that is its author's evident ability to do better."¹⁸ For the reviewer, Maugham does not write with skill and this is a consequence of his ignorance of the people he describes in *Liza of Lambeth* and also an unsympathetic feeling he has towards them. Together, these two limitations, despite Maugham's sharp eyes, prevent him from penetrating into the life of the workpeople he describes and from showing a less superficial description of them.

In spite of this, the reviewer sees Liza as a memorable character and as the only great achievement of Maugham in his first novel. Although asserting that the figure of Liza was drawn "roughly and unartistically, with violent colour and the blackest of black shadows," he defines her portrait "so complete and so strong that even now her ghost refuses to be laid; and that we take to be a considerable achievement for a writer of fiction."

After these considerations on the theme of the novel and on what he considers its only merit, the reviewer makes some severe criticism on the novel's language and description of details. In his view, they constitute the novel's grossness and what makes it unendurable. The way the reviewer comments on this aspect of Maugham's novel reveals he is very conservative. Indeed, some of his sentences seem to be scolding Maugham into some decency. In this respect, he says: "How unnecessary this is, and how disgusting. Mr. Maugham does not seem to know. He must learn the value of reticence." Apparently, he considers some passages of the novel rather immoral. After saying that as a reviewer he could

tolerate slang, he adds that “there are a number of needless and unpardonable things which we cannot by any means stomach.”

In accordance with his conservative principles, he could never interpret this aspect of Maugham’s novel as an attempt to be innovative and break through a rigid morality. For him, Maugham is just trying to outdo his rivals and, in this sense, his use of bad language does not justify his lack of reticence.

A predominant tone of disapproval also characterizes the last review of *Liza of Lambeth*. This was published in *The Spectator*, in its edition of November 13, 1897, in the session called *Some New Novels*¹⁹. Like all the other notes and reviews that *Liza of Lambeth* received this is also unsigned. The reviewer analyzes thirteen novels, eight of them in a more elaborate way whereas the other five are only briefly commented. Among these is *Liza of Lambeth*. However, it should be said that the reviewer justifies such a superficial comment. It is not that he underestimates those novels, but because of the great number of them coming out those days. In this way, after concluding his comments on Walford’s *Iva Kildare* by emphasizing the author’s “heartly geniality that makes her book very pleasant reading,” he starts talking about Maugham’s novel saying it is “of a very different type.” In a reference to Morrison, the reviewer defines *Liza of Lambeth* as a “tale of mean street.” However, the only difference he sees between the two writers is that Maugham describes the slum people as capable of boisterous enjoyment.

Although far from being as judgmental as the *Literature* reviewer, *The Spectator* reviewer also dislikes Maugham’s portrait of vice and crime among the slum folk. For him, Maugham paints them in unattractive colors. Another difference from the *Literature* reviewer is that this one understands that Maugham is animated by compassion for the heroine and her sisters. On the other hand, this does not prevent him from concluding his comments saying that the squalor of the novel is “often positively nauseating.”

This comment can lead us back to Curtis’s assertion that *Liza of Lambeth* was widely reviewed because “Fisher Unwin knew how to push his wares.” Even if it is true that Unwin was influential enough to persuade reviewers to consider Maugham’s first novel, he could not get a very positive review of it from them. At least in what concerns specifically the theme developed by Maugham, they all think he did not make a good choice. In their condemnation of Maugham’s theme, there are basically two reasons.

First of all, it is the fact that by the time of *Liza of Lambeth*'s publication the slum theme was already becoming hackneyed. As *The Bookman* reviewer argues, it was impossible for Maugham to say something new on this theme. On the other hand, if he could not say anything new, he certainly tried to say old things in a new way. This new way consists in his attempt to reproduce faithfully the way the London slum people talk and relate socially.

In this attempt of Maugham's to be innovative in his description of the slum people's talk and social relationship we can identify the second reason for the critics' condemnation of *Liza of Lambeth*'s theme. Although none of the above critics makes it explicit, there is the suggestion that Maugham was almost immoral in his description of the slum people. He did not show the due respect for the strict Victorian morality of his time.

Indeed, more than any other, social morality was the predominant criterion in the reviews of *Liza of Lambeth*. The description of the spontaneity, informality, and bad language used by the slum people seem to have been too shocking to be accepted. The reviewer of the late Victorian society still attributed a great importance to reticence. Any attempt to break with its morality would be duly condemned.

It is interesting to observe that this strong importance attributed to moral values helps to define the critics' concept of realism. From the way they criticized Maugham's realism, we can see they accept a realistic work, provided it is not too *realistic*. The realistic writer was supposed to submit his realism to the dictates of the strict moral code of the English society.

Eventually, these negative reviews seemed to have worked in favor of both Maugham and his publisher. Although, as we said above, Unwin failed in getting a positive criticism on Maugham's first novel, the negative criticism it received might have worked as a promotion of it. With the emphasis given by critics on Maugham's excessive use of bad language and lack of reticence they might have prompted the reading public's curiosity about the novel. They knew *Liza of Lambeth* would not be just another novel about slum people. In this sense, if Maugham was really trying to outdo his rivals, as was suggested by the *Literature* reviewer, he was quite successful.

If there was a predominance of negative criticism against *Liza of Lambeth*, the same cannot be said about its beginning writer. Once *Liza of Lambeth* was classified as a slum novel, Maugham was analyzed as a writer in relation to the greatest exponent in that movement, Arthur Morrison. Although no critic considered him as good as Morrison, they all

saw him as a clever and promising young writer. None of them discarded him as untalented for a literary career.

Now, considering those reviews of *Liza of Lambeth* from the perspective of the aesthetics of reception, we might have a different interpretation of some of the elements analyzed by the reviewers. For example, what the reviewers understand as a mere appropriation of a theme in vogue, we see as Maugham's awareness and use of the predominant literary horizon of expectations of his time in order to establish communication with the reading public. His decision was to make use of some personal experience that coincidentally could be developed into a popular theme in the literature of that time.

Furthermore, Maugham's choice of theme has a quite different interpretation when seen from the perspective of aesthetics of reception. It can be interpreted as the reader exerting his power over the work of art or, in a broader sense, over the predominant aesthetics of his time. In Jauss's words, the reader is playing his role as "an energy formative of history."²⁰

In this horizon of expectations in which it appeared, *Liza of Lambeth* could be immediately labeled within a category, the slum novel. This had a direct influence in the kind of review it would receive. For its reviewers, it was seen just as another slum novel and so it was treated. The best evidence of this was *The Athenaeum* reviewer's mistakes about the novel's plot. The consequence of this attitude could not be positive. Maugham and his novel were just put into a fixed category and thus deprived of a more serious study.

The question of innovation can also be detected in those reviews of *Liza of Lambeth*. The reviewers suggest that Maugham's choice of theme was simply done with an eye on the reading public's eagerness to consume slum novels. However, at the same time, they also leave implicit that *Liza of Lambeth* was not just a cheap imitation of some previous novels. Although using the same theme, Maugham developed a kind of realism which was innovative in the use of language, in the description of scenes and even in the approach to taboo topics like adultery. Nonetheless, the reviewers were unanimous in pointing to these as just lack of artistry.

However, when Maugham's first novel is compared to other contemporary slum novels, one wonders if it is not precisely his artistry that fascinates today's readers. Curtis is certainly correct when he asserts that "what is remarkable about *Liza* is not that it had models

but how much more readable and alive it is today than any of [the other slum novels]."²¹ Finally and still testifying to the artistic merits of Maugham's novel there is the fact that it is adaptable into other genres. An example of this is its adaptation into an opera, a form of representation very different from that of its original narrative conception.

2. *Attempting to escape from the human bondage*

Between the publication of *Liza of Lambeth* in 1897 and *Of Human Bondage* in 1915, Maugham published seven other novels²² and wrote at least fourteen plays. However, *Of Human Bondage* was an old project of Maugham's. Its first sketch was written soon after the success of *Liza of Lambeth*, between 1897 and 1898, when Maugham was living in Seville and was first entitled *The Artistic Temperament of Stephen Carey*. It was submitted to his publisher, Fisher Unwin and some others, who refused to pay the money Maugham asked for it. Thus it was put aside for some years until 1912 when Maugham decided to retake it.

According to Richard Cordell, when it was to be published, Maugham first named his novel *Beauty from Ashes*, a verse from the book of the prophet Isaiah²³. However, learning that there was already another novel bearing a similar title, he decided to call it *Of Human Bondage*, the title of the fourth part of Spinoza's *Ethics*, namely, "Of Human Bondage, or the Strength of the Emotions." Still according to Cordell, Maugham "was struck by the philosopher's assertions that we can make experience valuable when by the use of our imagination and reason we turn it into foresight; that thereby we can help shape our future and cease to be slaves of the past; that the submission to passion is human bondage, but the exercise of reason is human liberty."²⁴

Undoubtedly, the use of imagination and reason in order to cease his slavery from his own past was Maugham's express intention in writing *Of Human Bondage*. Once he said about it:

The book did for me what I wanted, and when it was issued to the world (a world in the throes of a terrible war and too much concerned with its own sufferings to bother with the adventures of fiction), I found myself free forever from those pains and unhappy recollections. I put into it everything I then knew and having at last finished it, prepared to make a new start.²⁵

So, writing *Of Human Bondage* was for Maugham an attempt to make a catharsis of some sad recollections from his past. Among these, the most painful one was undoubtedly his mother's death which took place when he was only eight. This was a trauma he never got over. Together with this, it should be also included his unhappiness when, as an orphan, after his father's death, he had to live with his uncle, Henry MacDonald Maugham, Reverend in Whitstable, Kent; his humiliation at school on account of his stammering; and his ambivalent sexuality.

Although asserting that with the publication of *Of Human Bondage* he had found himself free from his unhappy recollections, an incident reveals that Maugham was never able to get rid of the pain his mother's death caused to him. Robert Calder relates it:

A vivid revelation of the psychological scars borne by Maugham from that time occurred when, in 1945, he was asked to record for a series of 'Talking Books' for the blind the section of *Of Human Bondage* in which he describes the death of Philip's mother. Although it was then more than fifty years after the event, Maugham broke down and wept when he came to Philip's last meeting with his mother, and he could not continue.²⁶

The cathartic process Maugham expected to realize by writing his recollections was not as efficient as he wished it to be.²⁷

To some extent, this cathartic objective of *Of Human Bondage* explains its form. Although the long autobiographical Victorian novels were out of fashion and popular taste by the time of its publication, Maugham, who always had as one of his main characteristics a good sensitivity to perceive his public's taste, wrote this novel more interested in pleasing himself than his reading public. He certainly did not worry about the length it acquired. So, the great success it achieved some years after its publication was a surprise for Maugham. Pfeiffer, who was a close friend of his, says:

None of his novels before it had sold more than five or six thousand copies. He expected no more of this one. No one was more surprised than he over its success. Though he has never said so, I suspect he thinks it is somewhat overrated. He could hardly be expected to concur in the opinion of some that nothing he has written since it is equal to it.²⁸

One of the reasons for the delayed success of *Of Human Bondage* can be partly found in the historical moment it was released. As Maugham himself suggests above, at the time of its publication, England was involved in the second year of the Great War. In such a climate, a novel with more than six hundred pages could hardly expect to receive a warm

welcome by a reading public that was leading a tragic and sad life. The war climate can also explain the very few reviews it received, in spite of the fact that for many Maugham scholars this is his best novel. Actually, in its first twelve months, *Of Human Bondage* received only four reviews.

The first of these was published in the influential *The Times Literary Supplement* on August 12, 1915, the same month in which the novel came out²⁹. In his study of *Of Human Bondage*, Cordell considers that this article was not propitious because of the reviewer's ignorance of the impulse which was behind its writing.³⁰ Certainly, he is referring to the cathartic reason which led Maugham to write it. However, a more detailed analysis of *The Times* review can lead us to a different interpretation.

Before getting into a proper analysis of the novel, the critic begins by suggesting a similarity with the works of Henry Fielding. In this sense, *Of Human Bondage* is seen as part of a resurrected taste for the kind of novel produced by that eighteenth-century writer. With this, the reviewer is trying to place Maugham's novel within a specific current in English Literature. For him, it fits in with the "long, biographical form of novel." His conception is that, although out of vogue at that moment, Maugham's novel follows the general pattern of popular English autobiographical novels. In this sense, a more precise placing, which complements the assertion of *The Times* reviewer, is given again by Cordell. He sees *Of Human Bondage* as part of the same literary tradition which produced autobiographical novels such as Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield* (1850), Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh* (1903), Compton Mackenzie's *Sinister Street*, and Arnold Bennett's *Clayhanger* (1910).

After this first placing of *Of Human Bondage* within a literary current, the next step of *The Times* reviewer is to point out what a reader would expect in a novel like that and also the main difficulty involved in its production. For him, the reader, still with Fielding in mind, will approach *Of Human Bondage* not only interested in the events of the personal life of a certain character, but also in the way life itself is viewed and presented to him. In other words, he says that the biographical novel should be basically about a particular man's life and the way Life itself is represented through the life of that particular man.

Now, according to the reviewer, keeping a balance between Life and man is the capital difficulty in this kind of fiction. Usually, he says, as life is very various, man ends up just working as a looking-glass of Life and its diversity. However, in his view, Maugham avoided

that mistake. He manages to construct Philip Carey, the protagonist in *Of Human Bondage*, as a character who has flavor and individuality. His reactions to the different situations of life are not uniform. This portrait of Philip, together with the vivid and accurate settings for the different phases of his life, contribute to Maugham's success with the reader. For the reviewer they help to gain the reader's confidence and, in his own words, "his full agreement" at the close of the novel.

Nonetheless, this success with the reader does not mean the novel is impeccable. In order to give a peculiarity to a common experience such as Philip's "pilgrim's progress from illusion into reality, from dreaming into knowing, from gaping after the future into making the most of the present," the reviewer understands that Maugham had to make use of a bit of straining. This straining fault would be the "prevailing notion that only the miserable things are worth writing about." In this sense, the reviewer understands that Maugham gives more emphasis to the humiliation to which Philip is submitted in his relationship with Mildred than the moments of happiness which he lives with Norah Nesbitt. This makes one believe that life is basically constituted of only unhappy moments. On the other hand, the reviewer himself attenuates this criticism when he says it is more a fault of those days than of Maugham himself as a writer. Actually, he addresses novelists in general when he talks about this. In his view, "love and happiness are no less 'life' than lust and misery - and quite as good material for fiction, if only our novelists would see it."

In the last paragraph the reviewer analyzes *Of Human Bondage* in the context of the hitherto production of Maugham. In this sense, he understands that "the view of life which the book works out implies certainly a profounder mind than would be expected from Mr. Maugham's successful drama." Obviously, he is suggesting that Maugham's previous works were not that brilliant. This attitude is a reflection of Maugham's reputation among the literary critics and the English intelligentsia in the time of the publication of *Of Human Bondage*. As we have seen in the Introduction, after the publication of his first novel, Maugham was admired by the literary circles of London. However, this admiration dwindled with the publication of his next works which were not considered of good quality. There is a reversal in this situation only when Maugham starts making success in the theatre. In 1908, he got the remarkable number of four plays running at the same time in London. But, again he is under the attacks of the critics when he declares that his plays are meant to entertain his public. Since then, the critics began seeing him as an artist who - to use Maugham's own words - had sold his soul to Mammon.³¹

Still in this same paragraph the reviewer reveals his sympathies for Maugham's writing style. We can notice that this sympathy derives from the fact of Maugham not writing in accordance with the modernistic vogue that was starting to make its way into the English literary world. In opposition to the postulates of that movement, Maugham follows a traditional and conservative way of writing. The reviewer says that Maugham does not, like some novelists, "throw the mass of facts before us and bid us make what we can of it."

In fact, Maugham was always against the experimental style adopted by the modernists and in several occasions showed his disapproval of it. Interestingly enough, one of his criticisms against the modernistic style of writing fiction is quite similar to that of *The Times* reviewer. It can be found in one of his Ashenden short stories³², when the protagonist, who is an English spy working in Switzerland during the Great War, says about his activities in the espionage net:

He [the superior officer] shook hands with Ashenden and showed him out. Ashenden was well aware that he would never know what happened then. Being no more than a tiny rivet in a vast and complicated machine, he never had the advantage of seeing a completed action. He was concerned with the beginning or the end of it, perhaps, or with some incident in the middle, but what his own doings led to he had seldom a chance of discovering. It was as unsatisfactory as those modern novels that give you a number of unrelated episodes and expect you by piecing them together to construct in your mind a connected narrative.³³

Ironically, Maugham's refusal to follow the dictates of the Modernistic movement would become one of the main reasons for the critics' indifference to his works.³⁴

Concluding his analysis of *Of Human Bondage*, *The Times* reviewer retakes what he had mentioned previously as what should be the main elements in a biographical novel, i.e., Life and the life of a particular man, and sees how the former is seen, in this particular case, by the protagonist of Maugham's novel. For him, since Philip was neither a seer or poet, his life is adequately represented by the image of the Persian rug in the story. There is no meaning in its design. Although understanding that Maugham (and also Philip Carey and his friend Cronshaw) made a mistake as for the lack of meaning in the figures of a Persian rug, Philip's acceptance of no meaning to Life agrees with his condition of ordinary man. In this sense, not being able to see life as a poet or a seer does, he is understandably meant to remain in his human bondage.

A few days after this review of *Of Human Bondage* in *The Times Literary Supplement*, a second one appeared in *Athenaeum*, on August 21, 1915³⁵. Like the previous one, it also appeared in the same month of the novel's publication. Being unfavorable in its analysis of Maugham's novel, this review differs from that of *The Times Literary Supplement* in several aspects. However, before getting into a detailed analysis of this article, it is important to say that it was apparently written by a female and feminist reviewer. This particularity, although of no greater importance, helps us understand some considerations of its author. The most evident revealing trace of the reviewer's gender is when, in the very beginning of the article, she refers to Maugham's novel as a description of the process carried out "by a member of the male sex in the Victorian era." By referring to Philip as a member of the male sex, she is automatically excluding herself from that gender group. Thus, it becomes clear that the reviewer is a woman.

Just like in *The Times Literary Supplement*, the *Athenaeum* reviewer begins by commenting on the length of Maugham's novel. However, this time it is done from a very unfavorable point of view. She begins by saying that "today, when so many are teaching us tersely enough how to live and to die," it is a hard task to go through a novel of more than five hundred pages which describes the life of a man living in the Victorian age. Unlike *The Times* reviewer who, partly influenced by the length of the novel, tried to place it within a literary current, the first sentence of the *Athenaeum* reviewer reveals that she is more preoccupied with the novel's "practical" and educational side in the present time. Beyond doubt the reviewer is being guided in her analysis of *Of Human Bondage* by the dynamic characteristics of modern society. In this sense, it is inevitable that she will dislike it from the very beginning.

But the reviewer's dissatisfaction with Maugham's novels is not limited to its length and lack of educational content. It also involves the construction of the protagonist. For her, to be an orphan brought up by a grudging guardian and, furthermore, still to be handicapped are too many disadvantages to an ordinary person. Thus, she sees Philip Carey as someone removed from "the category of the average".

These characteristics of Maugham's protagonist are, in the reviewer's opinion, "a record of sordid realism." Her reference to the kind of realism developed by Maugham is possibly an influence from the criticism of *Liza of Lambeth*, his first and successful novel which had given him a reputation in the London literary circles. As we have already seen, one

of the main aspects criticized in that novel was precisely the kind of realism he used. A realism that was considered immoral and quite shocking by some critics.

Paradoxically, in spite of this dissatisfaction with the depiction of Philip Carey, the reviewer is extremely happy with Maugham's drawing of female characters. After regretting the death of Philip's guardian's wife, "the most sympathetically drawn of all the characters," before the middle of the book, she adds that "as a matter of fact the author's women are all in our opinion better drawn than his men." She is even able to sympathize with Mildred Rogers who, according to Cordell, is unforgettable not for her good qualities but rather for being "one of the most hateful, disagreeable female characters in fiction."³⁶ Actually, Cordell still adds to Mildred's reputation that "readers have confessed to hissing when she appears on a page."³⁷

In fact, the reviewer's sympathy with Mildred reveals some partiality in her appreciation of Maugham's characters. Besides her surprising sympathy with Mildred, another revealing hint of this partiality comes about when, still analyzing Mildred, she puts her personality in contrast to Philip's. Although admitting that Mildred was a selfish character, for the *Athenaeum* reviewer she nevertheless "has many redeeming qualities, but we find none in the man himself." Unhappily, she does not proceed to point out any of these redeeming qualities in Mildred.

Reinforcing this partiality of analysis and also our assumption that this article was really written by a female and feminist reviewer, when talking about Philip and Mildred's problematic relationship she understands that his interest in the girl was only to make her his mistress. She never mentions that twice Philip rescues Mildred from starvation and, in one of these occasions, she is also pregnant and had been abandoned by Emil Miller, her German lover. On this occasion, Philip not only takes care of Mildred but also of her baby. By making such a far-fetched interpretation of Maugham's characters, the reviewer seems to be fighting against a possibly intentional negative image of women developed by Maugham. This assumption becomes even more cogent when one takes into consideration that Maugham was always considered an avowed misogynist.³⁸

Still another fact reveals that this reviewer's main intention was a blind attack against what apparently she considers Maugham's unfair description of female characters. This is her inattentiveness to the name of the female characters. Had the reviewer been involved in a more serious analysis of Maugham's female characters, she should at least be able to

remember their names. However, in spite of her great sympathy for them, she is unable to name them. Thus, Aunt Louise is just Philip's guardian's wife; Mildred, who occupies a considerable part in the story, is referred to as just "the selfish ABC girl". Miss Wilkinson, Fanny Price, and Norah Nesbitt are all referred to as just "the other subjects of [Philip's] amours." On the other hand, no reference is made to Athelny's wife and their daughter, Sally, who can be seen as the personification of kindness, sincerity, and common sense. Thus, if we consider that the reviewer was a feminist, one wonders whether she did not make her analysis with a preconception about Maugham's attitude towards women regardless of the way his female characters are depicted in his fiction.

Actually, this assumption becomes cogent when we consider the recurrent figure of the *femme fatale* in the English literature of the turn of the century. In his analysis of *Of Human Bondage*, Calder lists and traces a parallel between Mildred and some of her contemporary *femmes fatales*. From this perspective, the *Athenaeum's* sympathy with Mildred has undoubtedly a much wider objective than just a specific attack on Maugham's depiction of women.

Finally, in the last paragraph the reviewer analyzes what she had previously called the leisurely and inadequate process which is the description of Philip's life. To begin with, she says that although we learn a good deal about the professions he tries, they were adopted from nothing approaching a real motive. It is obvious that the reviewer is still guiding her analysis from a pragmatic point of view. The only "relief" is the depiction of Philip's relationship with Athelny and his family during his medical student days although, in the reviewer's interpretation, much of what he says could be dispensed with as well as the discussions on philosophy, religion and art that Philip has with his friends in the Latin Quarter in Paris. Strangely enough, for her all of Philip's meditations on love, realism, religion, and the meaning of life are mere products of "an essentially morbid personality."

Concluding, we can say that for the *Athenaeum* reviewer the only literary merit of *Of Human Bondage* is the drawing of its female characters. For being such an implausible character, owing to his many disadvantages, reading about the events of Philip's life and all his meditations is a boring task in a world that demands more dynamism and practicality. If we consider that the bulk of the novel is precisely about Philip's life and his meditations, we can understand that, for the *Athenaeum* reviewer, the novel is not worth reading.

In spite of its blatant partiality, this review has a particular importance in the study of the reception of Maugham's novel. Its importance lies basically in the fact that it reveals how a feminist reacts to the work of a writer who, among other things, was known for his misogynist feelings. It becomes even more relevant for being an analysis of *Of Human Bondage* where, as we have said above, Maugham creates one of the most detestable female characters in fiction, namely, Mildred Rogers.

After this feminist reaction to *Of Human Bondage*, the next review of it came out in *Punch*, on August 25. Just like the two previous ones, this review³⁹ also begins commenting on the length of the novel. All its criticism revolves around the excess of details in the novel which the reviewer considers pre-Raphaelite. To give a proper idea of the length and amount of details in the novel, he says, in an attempt to be amusing, that it is "the kind of book that tells you in six hundred and fifty pages all you want to know about a group of characters, and a great deal more". Although not being as explicit as the *Athenaeum* reviewer, he seems to be suggesting that the novel could have been more succinct and economical.

Moving from the novel's form into its subject matter, the reviewer suggests that usually this kind of novel is really good or really bad. For him there seems to be no middle term for it. However, Maugham manages to break with this pattern, for *Of Human Bondage*, as an autobiographical novel, is neither one nor the other. It is good in part but in general it leaves an impression of boredom. Again, the main reason for this effect is the excessive use of details.

Talking about the construction of the characters, the reviewer understands that the life of the protagonist as a school-boy, art-student, doctor, and shop-walker does not inspire much interest. He says it is hard to speak of the two protagonists, Philip Carey and Mildred Rogers, as hero and heroine for Philip's drawing makes him "nebulous and uninteresting whereas Mildred is real enough, but, on the other hand, she is so detestable that one is always wishing to get rid of her society".

Interestingly enough, this reviewer shares the *Athenaeum's* opinion in what concerns the drawing of the female characters. For him, they make up for that of the protagonists'. Thus, he sees Miss Price, the poor art student, who ends up committing suicide in Paris out of emotional and artistic frustration, as "one of the most haunting and tragic figures that I have

met with in recent fiction." Also satisfactory is the drawing of Aunt Louisa, Philip's uncle's submissive wife. For them alone, according to the reviewer, the book is worth reading.

Paying too much attention to the length of the novel and the drawing of its characters, the reviewer barely analyzes its main theme, i.e., Philip's quest for freedom from intellectual and emotional bondage. His only comments in what concerns this theme of the novel is again what he considers the excessive use of details. He is definitely unhappy about how one is compelled to follow Philip's life so closely. Nothing is said about Philip's so many meditations on so varied and different aspects of life.

The last article on *Of Human Bondage* that was published within the first twelve months of its publication appeared in the *New Statesman*, in its edition of September 25, 1915. It is the only one that is signed by its author, Gerald Gould who, besides being a poet, critic and journalist, was also reviewer of the *Observer* after the Great War⁴⁰.

Gould's is a very favorable review of *Of Human Bondage* if not the most propitious one. In his analysis, he concentrates especially on the style developed by Maugham. In its first sentence, Gould already expresses his great admiration for the novel when he asserts that "Mr. Maugham has produced a very big book in every sense of the word." This admiration is such that he equals the number of pages of the novel to its number of merits.

However, these merits are not those Maugham is usually known for, i.e., well-finished constructions and sparkling verbal wit. None of those is present in *Of Human Bondage*. Instead, we have other merits that, at a first glance, seem defects in style. In Gould's words

the conversations and descriptions are often amazingly vivid, but seldom amusing: several characters are introduced who, we are given to understand, talk brilliantly, but Mr Maugham does not allow them to talk in the least brilliantly. There is minuteness without realism, passion without romance, variation without variety: one might say that Mr. Maugham's line is length without breadth. There is fury of concentration in every detail of what is by superficial test so diffuse.

For Gould these "defects" are deliberate and they have an objective in the construction of the novel. By using this artifice, Maugham is dealing with the artistic thesis that the part is greater than the whole. Thus, Life gets constrained by these defects to suit a specific point of view. According to Gould, this method, which consists basically in "disguising selectiveness by profusion, of making life conceal art," is new in England although it has already been practiced in other places. In this sense, he says that, if Maugham belongs to a school it is to a

French one. And he goes on: "But I am not sure that he does belong to a school. I am not sure he has not written a highly original book. I am not even sure he has not written almost a great one."

Talking about the way the above-mentioned method is developed by Maugham, Gould says that the way some events are depicted might, at a first moment, seem completely incoherent. But, if one takes into consideration that they are seen through the eyes of a crippled, self-pitying, and sexually unfulfilled boy, they become convincing. As a good example of this he takes the Bal Bullier which Philip attends soon after Fanny Price's suicide. After presenting its description in *Of Human Bondage*, Gould says that anyone who has seen a Bal Bullier will deny the description given by the narrator. However, it is quite coherent and convincing in the context of the novel because it is presented through the eyes of Philip. What we have, then, is not a description of a Bal Bullier as it really is but, following the narrative structure of the novel, it is depicted as Philip sees it in that specific moment of his life.

Finally, Gould concludes suggesting that the novel as a whole might sound revolting. This assertion resembles the *Atheneum's* for whom Philip's meditations are the products of "an essentially morbid personality." However, Gould manages to see the different and significant parts which constitute the whole. Thus, for him, when seen in its specific parts, *Of Human Bondage* reveals a philosophy which has much tenderness, patience, and endurance.

As it was said before, Gould's article is undoubtedly the most favorable one of those analyzed here. Coincidentally it bears a similarity to *The Times* in its approach to Maugham's novel. Both reviewers see as one of the greatest merits of *Of Human Bondage* the way Life is represented in it. They see that, although Life is represented in a somehow morbid way, it is so because it is seen through the eyes of a very unhappy and self-pitying boy. In this sense, Maugham was successful in showing not Life as it supposedly is, but how it is seen by a specific character. The reading of these two articles leads us to the conclusion that this specific representation of Life in *Of Human Bondage* through so many detailed moments of Philip Carey's life is undoubtedly the greatest merit of Maugham's novel.

Although the main concern of this work is with the reception of *Of Human Bondage* within the first twelve months of its publication, it is important to mention the turning point it had some years later. *Of Human Bondage* was published simultaneously in England and in the United States where Maugham was already known as a dramatist. In an article published in

The New York Times by the time of the novel's tenth anniversary, Marcus Aurelius Goodrich says its first reception in his country was not the one it deserved.⁴¹ In his view, the American critics were generally superficial in their analysis of Maugham's novel, always calling attention to its length. An attitude, as we can see, that does not differ much from that in England.

In spite of this, it was an American review that changed the reception that *Of Human Bondage* had originally received in its original country and also in the United States. The turning point of the story of the reception of *Of Human Bondage* was a review written by the American writer Theodore Dreiser which was published in *The New Republic*, on December 25, 1915.⁴²

Dreiser begins his article by describing the pleasure one feels after reading a good book. In a certain moment of his description he says that if a book can produce such an effect on the reader, one is compelled to call it a work of art. It is as such that he is going to analyze *Of Human Bondage*, a novel that provoked that pleasure in him.

Dreiser begins talking about Maugham's novel giving his general impression of it. For him it is an unmoral novel. He likes its theme and the way it is dealt with in the novel. Actually, he considers that only someone who is not short of genius could have handled subject matters like philosophy, religion, art and life itself and still develop characters like Philip Carey and Mildred Rogers.

Having enjoyed the novel so much, he gets surprised at its poor and negative reception both in England and in the United States. According to him, "English reviews were almost uniformly contemptuous and critical on moral and social grounds." On the other hand, American critics (with some exceptions), "for the most part have seen its true merits and stated them."

After this evaluation of the way *Of Human Bondage* was received in both England and in the United States, Dreiser lists what he considers to be the merits of the novel. For him Maugham leaves nothing out when handling the conflicts and meditations of Philip's. He sees them as a "beacon light by which the wanderer may be guided." This sense of completeness is also in Maugham's deep and convincing depictions of characters like Fanny Price and Cronshaw. Dreiser also admires the ingenuity Maugham used in the description of "philosophical" characters as well as vulgar ones like Mildred.

Contrary to the common complaint about its length, the only fault Dreiser sees in Maugham's novel is precisely the lack of some more details in one of its last passages. This is Philip's love affair with Sally. For Dreiser, it should have been developed as extensively as his previous involvements with Mildred and Norah Nesbit. Although he does not say it explicitly, Dreiser seems to feel a lack of equilibrium in the way Maugham describes Philip's last love affair. It was a scanty description in relation to the others.

To conclude his analysis and express his admiration for Maugham's construction of the novel, Dreiser borrows from it the image of the rug, which Cronshaw uses to talk to Philip about the meaning of life. Maugham's work in weaving Philip's life is comparable to the work of a craftsman weaving a Persian rug. Besides, Dreiser also compares it with "a symphony of great beauty by a master, Strauss and Beethoven, [that] has just been completed, and the bud notes and flower tones were filling the air with their elusive message, fluttering and dying."

Due to Dreiser's prestige when he wrote this article, it was inevitable that it would change the story of *Of Human Bondage's* reception. Speaking about this, Cordell says that "the acceptance of *Of Human Bondage* as a novel of unusual merit might have been delayed for years had not Theodore Dreiser's laudatory and persuasive review appeared in the *New York Nation*. For holding a good prestige among his contemporary intellectuals, Dreiser's review was followed by many other favorable notices in American journals."⁴³ Such a positive reception of *Of Human Bondage* in the United States inevitably reverberated in England.

Some years later, another fact helped to increase the interest of the English reading public in *Of Human Bondage*. That was, according to Cordell, the publication of Maugham's next novel *The Moon and Sixpence*, in 1919. Due to its great popularity it drew the attention of the reading public to its author's earlier novel.⁴⁴

Ten years after its publication, *Of Human Bondage* was already discussed in its qualities as a modern classic. This is at least the way the critic Goodrich sees it in his above-mentioned article published in the *New York Times* on the tenth anniversary of Maugham's novel. Goodrich comes to this conclusion after analyzing the trajectory of Maugham's novel.

In Goodrich's analysis, although forgotten by the intellectuals and the literary guilds, *Of Human Bondage* is still read and appreciated by those who like reading. In its first ten years of life, the novel kept a constant and increasing interest from the public in spite of the

indifference of publishers and reviewers to it. Besides, *Of Human Bondage* was also finding its way into the universities.

It is chiefly on these facts that Goodrich bases his view of *Of Human Bondage* as a modern classic. When he considers the reason for the critics' oblivion of the novel, he understands that it should not be looked for in the novel itself but rather in the critical methods adopted by the critics. In Goodrich's view, the novel is a victim of the kind of critical methods in vogue about the time Maugham started writing. In his own words, "the chief impetus behind these methods seems to be, as somebody has pointed out, an intent on the part of the critic to call attention to himself rather than to the work he is criticizing. A book received the spotlight if it were capable of reflecting sensational and startling color back upon him who directed the light." More than just an explanation of *Of Human Bondage's* critical reception, Goodrich's assertion has a defending attitude of Maugham's novel.

Confirming this view of Goodrich's is the fact that some years after the publication of his article, *Of Human Bondage* became widely used in courses in English schools. Maugham's reaction to this dignification was characteristic of his skeptical personality. It was revealed in the address that he made to the American Congress, in 1946, when he presented its library with the original manuscript of the novel. He then said:

It [*Of Human Bondage*] has now gained the doubtful honour of being required in many educational institutions. If I call it a doubtful honour, it is because I am not sure you can read with pleasure a book you have to read as a task. I had to read *The Cloister and the Hearth*, and there are few books for which I have a more hearty dislike.⁴⁵

As we could see, in terms of number of reviews the reception of *Of Human Bondage*, a novel that a decade after its publication was already pointed out as a modern classic, was very poor. They were no more than four articles. From the analysis of these articles, we can easily determine a few facts that contributed to this scanty number. To begin with, we have to consider, as Maugham himself suggests, the historical moment the world was living when it came out. It was the second year of the Great War in Europe, which had obviously altered everyone's life.

In such a climate, the length of the novel, a characteristic so frequently mentioned by the reviewers, also had a determinant role in the reception of *Of Human Bondage*. As it was

already said, the reading a 650-page novel during the days of war seemed to be a very unattractive task for reviewers and certainly for the reading public as well.

Finally, we should add the novel's apparently anachronistic style and theme. As the *Athenaeum* reviewer suggests, a lengthy autobiographical Victorian novel could hardly expect to raise much interest in a world that, besides the war that was happening, was also on the verge of an age where dynamism and practicability would become highly valued characteristics.

Besides influencing the scanty number of reviews it received, these facts were also determinant in the kind of criticism applied to *Of Human Bondage*. Two aspects predominated in these reviews, namely, the novel's length and its theme. We can notice, however, that depending on the perspective taken, these aspects had a negative or positive approach. The length of the novel was seen as a negative aspect only when the critic did not pay close attention to the development of its theme. Thus, for *The Times* reviewer and Gould, who analyze the novel in its individual parts and in the whole they constitute, the novel's length and apparent excessive use of details are fundamental to the complete development of its theme. This view would be reinforced by Dreiser when he complains of what he considers the only fault of the novel, the incomplete description of Philip's love affair with Sally. In other words, he was demanding more details in a novel already accused of being excessively detailed.

On the other hand, for the *Punch* reviewer and especially for the *Athenaeum* one, who approached the novel from a different perspective, its length is considered just an embarrassment for the reader. Both reviewers leave the impression that they are trying to place themselves in the shoes of the novel's reader for whom to go through its more-than-600 pages would be a boring task. They obviously overlooked its theme and how its structure was important to the complete development of the novel. Besides, it should also be remembered that the negative criticism in the *Athenaeum* review was partly connected to the feministic approach adopted.

Considering the two predominant sides in the reception of Maugham's novel, we can see that, when its theme and structure were analyzed together, *Of Human Bondage* was not only justified in its great number of pages but also considered a great novel. However, when

its length is seen in isolation or in the context in which it came out, *Of Human Bondage* was prematurely considered an outdated novel.

Putting this reception of *Of Human Bondage* in the perspective of Jauss's theory, we can notice some peculiarities of its horizon of expectations. Reviewers, for instance, show a certain difficulty in categorizing Maugham's novel within the literary production of that time. It would not fit in within any literary trend of the beginning of the century. The solution, as we could see, is the recurrence to the production of earlier centuries. Thus, Maugham's novel is identified as following the tradition of Fielding's lengthy novels.

In general, critics were not happy with Maugham's attempt to break with the predominant aesthetics of that time. On the other hand, it has to be said that he was not exactly trying to be innovative when rescuing a literary form from the past. In fact, the writing of a lengthy novel such as *Of Human Bondage* was motivated by Maugham's personal necessity of writing about his past experiences.

The reviewers' disapproval of the novel's length had no influence over the ordinary reader. As its trajectory reveals, throughout the years the reading public kept a constant interest in *Of Human Bondage*, in spite of the practical and dynamic characteristics of modern life.

Actually, this mistake of the reviewers reveals something else besides a misunderstanding of the readers' expectations. It also reveals that at the time *Of Human Bondage* was published, Maugham already had constructed what we could call a horizon of expectations of his own. His big success in the theater with plays that were very popular contributed to form an image of him as a predominantly popular writer, one without the capacity to produce works with profundity. Nowhere is this more evident than in *The Times Literary Supplement* where, as we have seen, the reviewer asserts that "the view of life which the book works out implies certainly a profounder mind than would be expected from Mr. Maugham's successful drama."

Besides his fame as a popular writer, there are at least two other elements of Maugham's horizon of expectations that we can deduce from the reviews of *Of Human Bondage*. The first one is the kind of realism he develops. There is a general disapproval of it. The *Athenaeum* reviewer even classifies it as sordid. As we could see, this is a condemnation that began as early as the publication of Maugham's first novel.

The second element is Maugham's alleged misogynist attitude. Again, this is especially evident in the *Athanaeum* review. In her analysis of the novel's character, the reviewer keeps an undisguised desire to disparage Philip Carey in favor of the female characters. She even tries to ennoble the character of Mildred Rogers who was undoubtedly meant to be a despicable creature.

Still in terms of horizon of expectations, we can also notice that the reception of *Of Human Bondage* changes when it is approached from a larger or a different horizon. Here, we are specifically referring to two articles. The first one is Gerald Gould's. Undoubtedly, this is the most favorable review of Maugham's novel. Gould can find so many qualities in *Of Human Bondage* precisely because he approaches it from an international perspective. He analyzes Maugham's novel not only in terms of what has been produced in England, but also in terms of what has been produced in Continental Europe, especially in France.

The second article we are referring to is Theodore Dreiser's. His analysis of *Of Human Bondage* was certainly done from a very different horizon of expectations. Being an American, his analysis manages to free itself from the literary atmosphere of either England or Europe.

Besides, in what concerns Dreiser's review, it is also important to notice its influence on the reception of *Of Human Bondage*. Being famous and respected in the literary circles of his time, his favorable review of Maugham's novel was a great contribution to its promotion into the status of modern classic. Trying a generalization about the reception of works based on this incident of *Of Human Bondage*'s trajectory, we can say it reveals that the opinion of the majority of critics can determine the fate of a work. But, this fate can be changed when prestigious names express their favorable or unfavorable opinion on that work. This is what the reception of *Of Human Bondage* evinces.

There is still a last comment we can make concerning the reception of *Of Human Bondage* in relation to Jauss' theory. As we could see, Jauss attributes the same importance to the act of reading regardless of who is the reader. Confirming this viewpoint, the trajectory of Maugham's novel reveals that the ordinary reader can really exert some influence on the reception of a work. As Goodrich relates in his article, the constancy of the reading public's interest in *Of Human Bondage* throughout the years helped it to find its way into the academic

life. Likewise, this constant interaction worked as a determinant factor to lead it to a classic status.

Comparing the reception of these two novels, Maugham's best known works of the first phase of his writing career, we can start identifying some characteristics which will predominate in the reception of his other novels throughout his life.

The predominant element in the critical reception of *Liza of Lambeth* was its definition as a slum novel. Maugham's work was received basically by means of comparisons with other writers of that kind of novel who were already established. Besides, the fact that it was his first publication meant he had no name in the literary circles yet. So, there could be no comparison with previous works of his.

Now, it was different in the case of *Of Human Bondage*. Maugham had already become famous because of his popular theatrical plays and that influenced the reception of his autobiographical novel. In spite of that, there was still the necessity of searching for paradigms in English literary tradition from the past in order to be carried a proper analysis of it. This is the case of the *Times Literary Supplement* that sees Maugham following the same line of people like Henry Fielding. Besides, we also have Gould's article where Maugham's style is identified with a French literary tradition.

In what concerns Maugham's style, we can notice that the kind of realism he practices is, on both novels, a polemical point for the reviewers. In *Liza of Lambeth*, it seems that his realism was too "realistic" for them. Perhaps we can say that his excessive zeal to be plausible when describing the Lambeth community, based on his personal experience as a medical student, together with an indifference towards the rigid morality of the Victorian society of his time, makes his realism rather shocking for the reviewers who in their analysis showed the range of their moral conservatism. Now, for those reviewers who did not like *Of Human Bondage*, the problem of its realism was its excess of details. If, as we have seen, there are those who did not like it for considering it monotonous, others saw it as a great achievement, especially when one takes into consideration the theme of the novel.

In what concerns the drawing of characters, the general view that predominates is that Maugham was quite successful in this aspect. Of course, this does not mean all reviewers liked his construction of characters. We should remember here *The Daily Telegraph* reviewer who refers to Liza as if she had been a true character. In the case of *Of Human Bondage*, those

critics, who did not like the protagonist of the story, show a great sympathy for the way Maugham drew the other characters, especially the female ones.

In general, we can conclude from the reception of these two novels of Maugham's first phase that he was not addressed as a great artist. In one way or another, he was seen as having some characteristics to be praised and others to be condemned for. Although not despised by the literary critics, it is clear that they seem to be cautious in relation to his production, always afraid of identifying him as a great name in the English Letters.

NOTES:

¹ W. Somerset Maugham. *Liza of Lambeth*. 1897 (Great Britain: Penguin Books in association with William Heinemann Ltd, 1967).

² Karl G. Pfeiffer, *W. Somerset Maugham – A Candid Portrait* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1958) 35.

³ Actually, there is a doubt about the name of the first short story Maugham sent to be appreciated by Fisher Unwin. Robert Calder suggests that that should have been 'Daisy.' In *Willie – The Life of W. Somerset Maugham* (London: Heinemann, 1989) 47.

⁴ Anthony Curtis, *The Pattern of Maugham* (London: The Quality Book Club, 1975) 17-25.

⁵ Although this is the original title of the typescript and the one used by Edward Garnett, when analyzing his report on it we will use the definite name it received later.

⁶ These two reports are now in the United States and belong to the Berg Collection of English and American Literature, in the New York Public Library.

⁷ Calder 50.

⁸ Calder 47.

⁹ "Edward Garnett, reader's report on a 'Lambeth Idyll' for T. Fisher Unwin." Rev. of *Liza of Lambeth*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *W. Somerset Maugham – The Critical Heritage*.

Anthony Curtis and John Whitehead, (London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987) 22.

¹⁰ Curtis, *The Pattern of Maugham* 18.

¹¹ Rev. of *Liza of Lambeth*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *Academy*, 11 Sep. 1897. *W. Somerset Maugham – The Critical Heritage*. ed. Curtis and Whitehead 23-24.

¹² “New Novels.” Rev. of *Liza of Lambeth*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *The Athenaeum*, 11 Sep. 1897, 3646:347.

¹³ “Liza of Lambeth.” Rev. of *Liza of Lambeth*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *The Daily Telegraph*, 22 Sep. 1897:9.

¹⁴ “Liza of Lambeth.” Rev. of *Liza of Lambeth* by W. Somerset Maugham. *The New Republic*, 19 Oct. 1921, XXVIII, 359:221-22.

¹⁵ Maugham, *Liza of Lambeth* 111.

¹⁶ “Novels.” Rev. of *Liza of Lambeth*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *The Manchester Guardian*, 21 Sep. 1897:4.

¹⁷ “Novel Notes.” Rev. of *Liza of Lambeth*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *The Bookman*, Oct. 1897:23.

¹⁸ “Liza of Lambeth.” Rev. of *Liza of Lambeth*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *Literature*, 6 Nov. 1897:84.

¹⁹ “Books: Some New Novels.” Rev. of *Liza of Lambeth*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *The Spectator*, 13 Nov. 1897, LXXIX:692.

²⁰ Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994) 19.

²¹ Curtis 19.

²² A good presentation and discussion of these novels can be found on the third chapter of Calder’s book.

²³ Richard Cordell, *Somerset Maugham - A Biographical and Critical Study* (London: Heinemann, 1961) 70-71.

²⁴ Cordell 70-71.

²⁵ W. Somerset Maugham, *Selected Prefaces and Introductions* (London: Heinemann, 1963) 37.

²⁶ Robert Calder, *W. Somerset Maugham and The Quest for Freedom* (London: Heinemann, 1972) 3

²⁷ Ironically, no critic has so far interpreted Philip's lameness in relation to Oedipus' club foot. Taking into consideration Maugham's insurmountable pain over his mother's death, this seems to be the real a cogent for his attributing his protagonist such a handicap.

²⁸ Karl G. Pfeiffer, "Maugham - As I Know Him," *The Maugham Enigma* (ed.) Klaus W. Jonas, (London: Peter Owen Limited) 32.

²⁹ "Of Human Bondage." Rev. of *Of Human Bondage*, by William Somerset Maugham. *The Times Literary Supplement*, 12 Aug. 1915,c : 169.

³⁰ Cordell 78.

³¹ An account of this dispute between Maugham and the theater critics of London is given by Anthony Curtis in his book *The Pattern of Maugham* 67-69.

³² This is a collection of short stories whose protagonist is called Ashenden. They were based on Maugham's activities as a spy for the British Government during World War I and were published in 1928 under the title *Ashenden or: The British Agent*.

³³ W. Somerset Maugham, *Collected Short Stories - Vol. 3*. (England: Penguin Books, 1963) 13.

³⁴ In this sense, the critic Joseph Epstein says about Maugham's works: "He was apolitical and he wrote dead against the grain of modernism, with all its difficulty, preferring instead to write as plainly as possible about complex things." (As quoted by Troy James Basset in "W. Somerset Maugham: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism, 1969-1997". *English Literature in Transition 1880-1920*. Vol. 41:2 (1998): 134.

³⁵ "Fiction." Rev. of *Of Human Bondage*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *The Athenaeum*, 21 Aug. 1915:4582. *W. Somerset Maugham – The Critical Heritage*. Anthony Curtis and John Whitehead, 129-130.

³⁶ Cordell 76.

³⁷ Cordell 76.

³⁸ In this aspect, Calder says about Maugham: "If there was a vein of misogyny in Maugham it was, like his attitude to mankind as a whole, directed at women in general; he never lost interest in women as individual." (Calder, *W. Somerset Maugham & The Quest for Freedom* 21) However, Curtis has a different view on this aspect of Maugham's personality. In his analysis of the amorous triangle in *The Moon and Sixpence* involving the protagonist Charles Strickland, the Dutchman Dirk Stroeve and his wife Blanche, he says: "As we all know genius at close range is a killer and it is Blanche who, after she has cuckolded her husband with Strickland, must die because she is a woman, and as such jealous of the ideal." To this, he still adds: "Away from London, away from the adventuresses and the coolly complaisant wives of Maugham's society comedies, women are a drag and a bore." (Curtis, *The Pattern of Maugham* 105).

³⁹ "Our Booking-Office." Rev. of *Of Human Bondage*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *Punch*, 25 Aug. 1915, CXLIX: 179-180.

⁴⁰ Gerald Gould. Rev. of *Of Human Bondage*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *New Statesman*, 25 Sep. 1915. *W. Somerset Maugham – The Critical Heritage*. Anthony Curtis and John Whitehead, 126-129.

⁴¹ Marcus Aurelius Goodrich, "After Ten Years of *Of Human Bondage*," *W. Somerset Maugham - The Critical Heritage* (ed.) Anthony Curtis and John Whitehead (London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987) 135-138.

⁴² This article was reproduced in Jonas's *The Maugham Enigma*, pp. 114-120, from where I am quoting.

⁴³ Cordell 79. - In the speech he delivered at the Congress Library on April 20, 1946, by the occasion of his presenting that institution with the manuscript of *Of Human Bondage*, Maugham also mentions *The Nation* as the newspaper where Dreiser's review was published.

However, in the reproduction of this speech, which appears in *The Maugham Enigma*, a footnote is added which asserts that the review actually appeared in *The New Republic* of December 25, 1915.

⁴⁴ Cordell 79.

⁴⁵ W. Somerset Maugham, "*Of Human Bondage With a Digression on the Art of Fiction*," *The Maugham Enigma*, (ed.) Klaus W. Jonas, (London: Peter Owen Limited) 127-128.

**THE RECEPTION OF
THE MOON AND SIXPENCE
AND *CAKES AND ALE***

The purpose of fiction is to give aesthetic
pleasure. It has no practical ends.

The business of the novelist is not to
advance philosophical theories;
that is the business of the philosopher,
who can do it better.

(W. Somerset Maugham)

1. An artistic soul looking at the moon

The *Moon and Sixpence*¹ was published in April 1919 and, according to John Whitehead, it marks the beginning of the phase of highest achievement in Maugham's writing career². The book is about Charles Strickland, an English stockbroker, who, under the pressure of an uncontrollable creative impulse, abandons his family and goes to Paris to paint. There, while striving to develop his techniques, he gets into an amorous triangle with a Dutch painter, Dirk Stroeve, and his wife Blanche, which ends with her committing suicide. After spending a time working as a beach-comber in Marseilles, Strickland goes to Tahiti where he lives with a native girl. There he continues the development of his painting techniques and manages to paint the masterpiece which finally brings relief to his tormented artistic soul. This, however, is destroyed by his wife under his request soon after his death.

It was based on the life story of the French painter Paul Gauguin that Maugham devised such a plot. In spite of this, critics do not consider *The Moon and Sixpence* as either a biography or even a biographical novel for although there are many similarities between the stories of Strickland and Gauguin, there are also many events that differ from the facts of the French painter's life³. In this sense, Whitehead asserts that Maugham "did not attempt anything in the nature of a portrait, but in Charles Strickland created a wholly invented character whose career bears only a superficial resemblance to Gauguin's"⁴. Thus, it is more

appropriate to affirm that the plot of *The Moon and Sixpence* was just *suggested* or *inspired* by the Gauguin legend.

This legend was certainly the one Maugham found more appropriate for a theme he had long in mind. This theme, which underlies the events of the novel, is the agony of an artistic soul in order to find its proper way of expressing itself. As part of this thematic approach, Maugham also explores in his novel the conflict with society the artist has to face in order to fulfill his creative impulse. According to Curtis, that was a theme in evidence at the time of the publication of *The Moon and Sixpence* which had its support in the many instances of real English artists who had to run counter to the conventions of their time and society in order to fulfill their artistic temperament. Among others, he cites Charles Dickens, Oscar Wilde, James Joyce, and D.H. Lawrence. But, what makes Strickland's story different from all those above instances, with perhaps the exception of Joyce's, is that he does not depart with or look for someone else, but rather has in mind the single objective of fulfilling his artistic temperament.⁵

As said before, this theme seems to have been in Maugham's mind for a long time and, in different occasions, was roughly developed in some of his previous works. Besides *The Moon and Sixpence*, it was first worked in *Of Human Bondage*, with the character Fanny Price. Fanny, an English girl living in Paris to study painting, ends up committing suicide in face of her frustration for not being able to become a great painter. Furthermore, still in that novel we can already find a reference to Gauguin's story. It is through Clutton that Philip Carey hears about Gauguin whom his friend had met in Brittany and whose style was influencing him at that moment.

Besides *Of Human Bondage*, the other work where Maugham had previously approached the theme of the tormented artistic soul was in the short story "The Alien Corn." Here, the protagonist has a similar fate to Fanny Price's. After being disillusioned in his aspiration to become a pianist and in face of his family's opposition to his plans, George Bland also commits suicide. Thus, Strickland can be seen as a successful counterpart to both Fanny Price and George Bland.

In face of the recurrence of this theme in Maugham's fiction, one can be led to wonder if, like *Of Human Bondage*, *The Moon and Sixpence* did not somehow work as a catharsis for Maugham, too. In this sense, it is interesting to notice Curtis's assertion that "the

artist-gentleman dilemma is one which [Maugham] never succeeded in resolving in his own life."⁶ However, it should be said that Strickland seems to be a projection of what Maugham would like to have been, for unlike Strickland who unremorsefully broke with the morality of his society, he was never able to do the same in what concerns his emotional life. His amorous relationship with Gerald Haxton, his so-called secretary-companion, was never made public.

Actually, it was with Haxton's help that Maugham could collect material for the novel he had projected long before. In 1916 he was in the United States to arrange for the production of one of his plays *Our Betters* and, from San Francisco, he and his secretary-companion departed to the South Seas. By the time of Maugham's visit to Tahiti, Gauguin had been dead for twelve years. He contacted everyone who had known the French painter and eventually even returned with a painting which had been made on a door by Gauguin. After this trip Maugham worked as an intelligence agent in Russia from where he left suffering from tuberculosis. He then entered a sanatorium in the North of Scotland and later moved to a house he had rented in Surrey, an English seaside resort. It was during this three-month period of convalescing that he wrote *The Moon and Sixpence*.

The novel was finally published in April 1919 and was first reviewed by *The Times Literary Supplement*, on its edition of April 24, 1919⁷. This is an interesting coincidence in so far as it was a sentence of that newspaper review of *Of Human Bondage* that Maugham took to be the title of his new novel. At some point of his analysis of the protagonist of that autobiographical novel, the reviewer defines him saying that "like many young men he was so busy yearning for the moon that he never saw the sixpence at his feet."⁸

The Times' review of *The Moon and Sixpence* is very favorable, although only the novel's theme is analyzed. The reviewer, who does not sign the article, begins by talking about the difficulty in portraying a genius. That's why, he says, after reading the first page of Maugham's novel he felt a certain misgiving. Actually, his misgiving was not only for Maugham's proposal in portraying a genius but also because of that author's assertion in the very beginning of his novel that "the greatness of Charles Strickland was authentic and his genius undoubted". However, the reviewer admits that his misgiving was soon dispelled because Maugham was successful in his objective. In his own words, "Mr. Maugham has given us a ruthless and penetrating study in personality with a savage truthfulness of delineation and an icy contempt for the heroic and the sentimental".

For *The Times* reviewer, Charles Strickland's life story can be easily outlined, something he does in a few words. Following his assertion that the novel deals basically with the description of the personality of a genius, he identifies on this account two sides: the debit and the credit. The debit side, which is the list of bad traits in Strickland's personality, he considers "lamentably obvious": "complete selfishness and callousness in all human intercourse; betrayal of his friends, ruin of their wives, and so forth." The credit side which he considers to be more easily overlooked can be mistaken for Charles's poverty, the squalor and the lack of material reward. Nonetheless, this credit side of Charles's life story is in fact constituted by "the unceasing toil; the spiritual isolation, the torturing obsessions of a spirit for ever striving to express the inexpressible." Thus, the reviewer identifies a sentence in the novel which he considers a key to the understanding of Strickland's character. This sentence is a comment he makes on Peter Breughel, who was also a painter: "He's all right. I bet he found it hell to paint." Obviously, what the reviewer is suggesting is that with this comment, Strickland was in fact revealing his own condition. In other words, Strickland was living in a hell as a consequence of his difficulty in expressing what was going on inside himself.

Proceeding with his interpretation, *The Times* reviewer understands that Strickland's inability to conciliate those two sides of his personality is what constitutes his real tragedy. The world did not know the hell inside him due to his genius and, on the other hand, he would make no serious effort to reveal it. This distinguishes him from other artists and the reviewer suggests that this is what is innovative in Maugham's portrayal of a genius. Like any other romantic artist, Strickland needs friends with whom to share his sacrifice and who would be glad to perform their role as such. However, differently from the other artists, Strickland would never be willing to reward his friends with his appreciation. For him, their sacrifice was to be accepted without any thanking. This, in the reviewer's interpretation, is a consequence of the fact that Strickland has "both sides of his nature [...] abnormally developed, and completely divorced from one another." Whereas his physical being is a reversion to that of the primeval savage, his spiritual being "was one continuous obsession." Concluding, the reviewer asserts that this is Maugham's view of tragedy. A view that, although merciless, is not uncharitable and explains much.

In general, we can say that this was a rather favorable review of *The Moon and Sixpence*. The reviewer is happy with Maugham's novel, especially because of his choice of theme and the satisfactory way he manages to develop it. Besides, although the narrative

structure is mentioned only *en passant*, the absence of any severe criticism on it is an indication of the reviewer's approval.

In the following day after the publication of this review in *The Times Literary Supplement*, another appeared in *The Athenaeum*⁹. Actually, twice *The Athenaeum* mentions *The Moon and Sixpence* in its pages during the year of its publication. In the first time it was not exactly a complete review, but rather a very brief one with short comments on Maugham's novel. Just like *The Times* reviewer, *The Athenaeum* one also begins by asserting the difficulty in portraying a genius in fiction. In his view, in order to achieve this objective Maugham "wilfully handicapped himself with improbabilities." The main of these improbabilities is Strickland's bolt from his family at the age of forty only to pursue his desire to paint in Paris. However, these improbabilities of the novel are well handled by Maugham. The reviewer understands that they serve cleverly to depict the originality of Strickland's personality. They give him a "singular force and impressiveness." Besides, the other characters and incidents contribute to the solidity of the novel.

After this short note in *The Athenaeum*, the next review of *The Moon and Sixpence* appeared in *The Observer* on its edition of May 4, 1919¹⁰. Coincidentally, just like the previous reviews of *The Times* and *The Athenaeum*, this one also begins by mentioning the difficulty of the theme chosen by Maugham and how successful he was in handling it. For the reviewer, Strickland is an odious and a great man at the same time. In this sense, Maugham's achievement consists basically in making "his greatness appear as plainly as his odiousness."

After a short summary of the main incidents of the plot the reviewer points out what he considers the only failing in the novel: Maugham's inability in depicting the beauty and power of Strickland's works. He does not manage to produce the real effect they are supposed to produce in an observer. Nonetheless, this frailty does not affect the drawing of Strickland as a genius. The power of his personality is convincingly conveyed. His greatness can never be doubted and although one might hate him for some of his selfish deeds, this hatred is to last short. The reason for one's incapacity to hate Strickland long is that the odiousness of his personality is presented like "some elemental force that must have its way, though little worlds are shattered." Doubtless, one of these little worlds that are shattered is certainly the Stroeve's marriage. Concluding his analysis, the reviewer, taking into consideration the subtlety, restraint, balance and strength with which, in his view, *The Moon and Sixpence* was written, calls it "a novel of uncommon power."

Following the previous articles, the next review of *The Moon and Sixpence* also begins by mentioning the difficulty of the theme chosen by Maugham. It appeared in *Punch*, on May 7, 1919¹¹. The first sentence of this review reads: "The Great Man is, I suppose, among the most difficult themes to treat convincingly in fiction." However, unlike the other critics who only generalize on the difficulty of such a theme, the *Punch* one is more precise and names one of the handicaps in dealing with such a theme. For him, the author who chooses to deal with the life of a genius has to "postulate at least some degree of acquaintance on the part of the reader with his celebrated subject." If, he suggests, the author is not successful in establishing this acquaintance between the celebrity he proposes to talk about and his readers, the latter abandons the book quite easily. In this sense, Maugham has a credit in *The Moon and Sixpence* for the reviewer understands that he makes his readers accept the greatness of Strickland at his own valuation.

This effect is achieved by means of his unsparing realism when portraying Strickland. For him the characteristics that Maugham attributes to his protagonist ("heartless, utterly egotistical, without conscience or scruple or a single redeeming feature") make Strickland one of the most alive figures in recent fiction. For the reviewer, this is Maugham's best work so far. In his opinion, Maugham's sardonic humor, which was known through his previous works, also helps in the construction of the novel's characters. In this sense, he praises the characteristic touch with which Maugham shows Strickland escaping the "pseudo-artistic atmosphere of a flat in Westminster and a wife who collected blue china and mild celebrities."

This reference to the Westminster flat and Strickland's wife gives the critic room for an evaluation of the other characters of the novel. After asserting that Mrs. Strickland "is among the best of the slighter characters", he refers to the novel as a whole as "a tale with a singularly small cast." Concluding, he sets his verdict on the novel as "an unhesitating *stet*."

After these four foregoing laudatory reviews of *The Moon and Sixpence*, an unfavorable one appears in the pages of *The Athenaeum*, where ironically it had already been praised in a short review before. This new review, which was published on May 9, 1919, was written by the short-story writer Katherine Mansfield and its title, "Inarticulations" already reveals how Mansfield sees Maugham's novel¹².

There are three distinct moments in Mansfield's review of *The Moon and Sixpence*: first of all, she analyzes the construction of the protagonist of the story and its theme; then, in a second moment, she analyzes the plot of the novel and, finally, she analyzes the narrative strategy used by Maugham.

Mansfield begins her analysis of the protagonist in Maugham's novel in a very interesting way. She imagines Charles Strickland's reaction if Maugham had expressed to him his desire to present him to the reading public through a biography of his. Characteristically, Strickland's answer would be, according to Mansfield: 'Go to hell. Let them look at my pictures or not look at them - damn them. My painting is all there is to me.' With this make-believe situation, Mansfield begins her attack on Strickland's personality. Making use of strong words and images, she expresses her dissatisfaction with Strickland's portrayal by comparing him to an Australian Maori warrior. She says:

Strickland cut himself off from the body of life, clumsily, obstinately, savagely - hacking away, regardless of torn flesh and quivering nerves, like some old Maori warrior separating himself from a shattered limb with a piece of sharp shell. What proof have we that he suffered? No proof at all. On the contrary, each fresh ugly blow wrung a grin or a chuckle from him, but never the slightest sign that he would have had it otherwise if he could.

In other words, she considers him a savage and obstinate person whose life is not worth reading about. And it is based on this notion that she will develop her analysis of Maugham's novel.

Proceeding with her criticism of Maugham's construction of Strickland, Mansfield analyzes him as a possible real character. If we take Strickland is no imaginary character as the narrator tries to induce us to believe in the beginning of the novel, she assumes that his drawing is also unsatisfactory. The description of two or three pictures by him as presented in the novel are not enough to help us in the understanding of the character. Still of less effect in this sense is the use that Maugham makes of elements such as Strickland's international fame, the books that have been written about him in English, French, and German and even the presentation of the name of their authors and publishers. However, if these elements are evidence that Strickland is a real person, in this case Mansfield understands that Maugham's book has its value as long as it is seen as a kind of guide to the painter's works.

If, on the other hand, Strickland is really an imaginary character, she also considers him quite unsatisfactory. In this case, she misses a deeper description of his personality. She

demands to be shown something of the works of his mind, more elaborate and convincing comments of his upon what he feels than his constant 'Go to hell.' Mansfield understands Strickland should have been given some quality we could love.

These considerations of Mansfield on the construction of Strickland reveal that she was not aware that he had been based on a real person. When her analysis of *The Moon and Sixpence* was included in a collection of articles entitled *W. Somerset Maugham - The Critical Heritage*, the editors added a note in this sense. According to them "unlike several other reviewers, [she] failed to connect the character of Strickland with the painter Paul Gauguin."¹³

After these considerations on Strickland, Mansfield proceeds to an analysis of the events of his life, which constitute the plot of the novel. For her, the transformation that Strickland undergoes when he is already a middle-aged man is not cogent. In this respect we should remember that the *Punch* reviewer also has the same opinion with the only difference that he understands these improbabilities of Strickland's life are cleverly used by Maugham in the construction of his character. Apparently Mansfield bases her considerations on an attempt to understand or give coherence to the psychology of Strickland according to what would be considered the psychology of a "normal" person. In accordance with this definition of normal behavior, the facility with which he abandons his life in London and adapts to his new reality in Paris is rather unconvincing. Actually, she says that "the reason is unthinkable." She is referring not only to the improbability of his behavior as a middle-aged man but also to the lack of a convincing explanation by the narrator for it. She just cannot accept that someone changes his nature so abruptly like Charles Strickland did in such a radical way. However, for the narrator, "he can; he does" - to use Mansfield's words - without any convincing explanation. Being more specific about her criticism, Mansfield cannot accept that Strickland leaves his family behind in London without ever giving them a second thought. After moving to Paris, he very easily adapts to it, a city he had never visited before and which is so different from London. Besides, there is also the physical transformation Strickland undergoes without any serious consideration about it.

In her analysis of the main events and the traits of Strickland's personality, we can detect some feminist slant in Mansfield's review of *The Moon and Sixpence*. A first indication of this is when she refers to Strickland's wife as a "charming cultured woman," which, although not being entirely untrue, is not apparently the main objective of the narrator when depicting her. Mrs. Strickland's role in the novel would be more appropriately related to what

the *Punch* reviewer called the "pseudo-artistic atmosphere of a flat in Westminster." She was in the ironical situation of paying tribute to second-rate artists of the London society whereas unable to recognize the genius of the man she was married to. A second moment comes when she is referring to Strickland's relationship with Blanche Stroeve, the wife of Dirk Stroeve, the Dutchman who had helped him when he was sick. The adjectives she uses to refer to these three characters and their amorous triangle is quite revealing of her feminist approach:

Then he is discovered, half dead of a fever, by a stupid kind-hearted little Dutchman who takes him into his flat and nurses him. The adored gentle wife of the Dutchman falls under Strickland's spell and ruins her life for him. When he is sick of her (for his contempt for women is fathomless) she takes poison and dies. And Strickland, his sexual appetite satisfied, 'smiles dryly and pulls his beard.'

Reading such sentences one is easily led to conclude that Strickland is some kind of magician who seduces Blanche with his mysterious and evil powers. As for his fathomless "contempt for women," it would be more correct to say that Strickland, as the *Punch* reviewer showed with the use of the term odiousness, had a fathomless indifference to all human beings with whom he related. Ironically, a few paragraphs ahead Mansfield quotes a passage from *The Moon and Sixpence* which confirms Strickland's indifference not only to women but to everyone around him: "He asked nothing from his fellows except that they should leave him alone. He was single-hearted in his aim, and to pursue it he was willing to sacrifice not only himself - many can do that - but other..."

Mansfield's next step is to analyze the narrative strategy used by Maugham. Again, taking into consideration that the story is narrated by a friend of Mrs. Strickland's and also Charles Strickland's difficulty in articulating his thoughts, Mansfield points out faults in this aspect of the novel. She presents a short conversation between Strickland and the narrator and the latter's assertion that, due to Strickland's inarticulateness he had "to put words into his mouth - divine[] them from his gestures." Then, Mansfield presents another passage in which the narrator contradicts himself when he says: "From his own conversation I was able to glean nothing." In still another example, she says the narrator asserts that Strickland's life consists of dreams and hard work but that these are not shown. And as a last fault in the narrative structure, when the narrator defines Strickland as someone who is "single-hearted in his aim, and to pursue it he was willing to sacrifice not only himself - many can do that - but other...", Mansfield questions whether what he is doing is really a sacrifice. Using an allusion from the

Bible she suggests there is no sacrifice when "you do not care a rap whether the creature on the altar is a little horned ram or your only beloved son."

Concluding her article, Mansfield tries to make a connection between the outstanding quality of Strickland's personality and his alleged artistic greatness. For her, his outstanding quality is his contempt for life and its ways and that this should not be confused with liberty. Apparently, Mansfield implies that one of the qualities of the artistic soul is to be free. However, with his behavior and attitudes Strickland does not reveal to be a free man but rather someone who is behaving like a drunkard. And she proceeds to affirm that "great artists are not drunken men; they are men who are divinely sober". In what concerns liberty, it is "a profound realization of the greatness of the dangers in their midst."

Perhaps the reason for such an unfavorable review by Mansfield has to do with the fact, as Curty and Whitehead suggest, that she fails to connect the protagonist of Maugham's novel with the life of the painter Paul Gauguin. Besides, Mansfield never tries a serious understanding of Strickland's personality and behavior based on the assumption that he was an artistic soul striving to express himself, something which is revealed by the narrator since the very beginning of the novel. Undoubtedly what predominates in her analysis is an attempt to understand him only as a human being who shows no respect for the moral values of his society.

After this unfavorable review of *The Moon and Sixpence* by Katherine Mansfield, another one, also unfavorable, appeared in *The Saturday Review*, on its edition of May 17, 1919¹⁴. Entitled "The Primitive Man," this unsigned review is, like the previous one, based on moral values and, as the title suggests, a psychological interpretation of Maugham's novel. In this sense, it is not surprising that the reviewer begins by doubting the fictional nature of *The Moon and Sixpence*. Thus, the very first sentence of his article reads: "This book is so purely a study in psychology that we doubt whether it deserves to be classed as a novel." For the reviewer, the difficulty in considering Maugham's book as novel is that it has no plot, incident or love and, as a psychological study the problem it presents is not new. This problem, in his words, would be "the analysis of the naked soul of the barbarous or natural man," that is, the man who refuses the social and religious conventions of his society, the man who does not care so much about what his fellows think of him. No doubt, there is much similarity between this interpretation of Strickland's conflicts and that of Mansfield's.

For the reviewer of *The Saturday Review*, however, there is something new about the way Maugham deals with this problem which he suggests to be already hackneyed. It is that in his story the savage he draws is different from others in fiction. This difference consists in the fact that, "as a rule the savage in fiction is afraid of his fellow men's opinion or the police; he requires the invisible cap to do himself justice." Maugham's savage, that is, Charles Strickland, obviously does not fit in with this definition.

Like Katherine Mansfield, this reviewer is also displeased with Strickland's excessive use of the expression 'Go to hell.' He is displeased although he asserts that this expression has become commonplace and is no longer capable of "thrilling suburbia" as it was before the war. He obviously does not accept the narrator's justification that Strickland had a deficiency "in the art of expression in words." For the reviewer, this was a rather wearisome way of expressing himself.

In what we could consider the main event of Strickland's life, his breaking with his family and society in order to fulfill his artistic impulse, the reviewer sees this as "unlikely, if not impossible." For if Strickland's genius was so compelling as the narrator wants us to believe, he could not have suppressed himself until the age of forty. Furthermore, the reviewer still adds, although he admits not to be sure of it, "that all painters do their best work before forty, as all poets certainly do, we are sceptical about the crypto-Monet living the stockbroker's life till that age."

Still in accordance with his interpretation that the main theme of the novel is the drawing of a savage man and his breaking with social norms and traditions, the reviewer understands that Maugham exaggerates in his artistic effects. In this sense, he asserts that "his primitive man is too much of a brute to be true to nature." The example which he points out of Maugham's artistic exaggeration is the amorous triangle involving Strickland, Dirk Stroeve and his wife. The outcome of this, with Blanche Stroeve's suicide, he names "*Sadisme* with a vengeance."

It is only towards the end of the novel that the reviewer can identify some positive moments in Maugham's novel. The first one is the description of "the life of a beach-comber in the purlieus of Marseilles." The second one is the description of life in the South Sea Island. But then he makes clear this is no personal merit of Maugham's since he considers a subject "impossible for travellers and novelists to stale." Finally, the description of

Strickland's death of leprosy which, the reviewer accurately identified as based on Maugham's experience in St Thomas's.

Finally, *The Saturday Review*'s analysis of *The Moon and Sixpence* concludes with its author trying to connect the title of the novel with what he understands to be its main theme. Thus, its (the name of the novel) message is that those who try to realize the impossible get little for that. In this manner, the objective of the novel is to show the price an artist has to pay for his selfishness in trying "to live for his brush and canvas alone." Here, one can easily see that the reviewer is oriented by a strong sense of the poetic justice. No doubt, this is an interpretation which is entirely based on the reviewer's set of moral values.

The last review of *The Moon and Sixpence* in the month of May appeared in *The Nation* on its edition of 31st under the title "The Modern Artist"¹⁵. Like the two previous ones which were also published in May, this is an unfavorable review of Maugham's novel. Already in its very first sentence, the reviewer asserts that it is interesting to take Maugham's novel not for its literary value but rather for being a "literary portmanteau of a remarkable modern obsession". This obsession, as the title suggests, is the depiction of the modern artist, a theme that, to some extent, was already becoming hackneyed in the English literature of the beginning of the century.

The reviewer then proceeds with a summary of the main incidents in the novel in which predominates a tone of dissatisfaction. An example of this is when, after quoting Strickland's answer to an urge to negotiate with his wife, the reviewer says: "Such is the austerity of the artistic genius." To this, he still adds an imagery which reminds us of Mansfield's comparison with the Maori warrior in her article. He says: "Strickland's genius indeed is so very austere that flesh and blood will not tolerate it, and we find him breaking out into wild and brutal fits of sensuality, in which the coarser the instrument, the happier is Strickland's outraged flesh and blood." After this mention of his "brutal fits of sensuality," the reviewer expectedly relates the episode involving the Stroeves.

Immediately following this summary of the novel's plot, the reviewer points out what he apparently considers to be the main faults in the novel and which coincidentally had already been presented by other reviewers. The first one concerns the description of Strickland's paintings. In spite of the two descriptions provided by the doctor who saw him in

his last days, the reviewer understands Maugham was reticent about their quality, especially in face of his insistence in affirming Strickland's greatness.

It is still in connection with this greatness of Strickland that the reviewer points out another fault in Maugham's novel. This concerns his opinions and views of the world. For the reviewer, it would be extremely interesting to know some of Strickland's conversations and his opinions about things, events and people. However, what predominates throughout the novel is his constant refrain "Go to hell," an expression which he indiscriminately applied to everyone who crosses his way: "wives, mistresses, prostitutes, friends, foes, critics, admirers, thieves, waiters, nurses, and dealers."

In the last paragraph, the reviewer points to what he considers to be Maugham's faults in the constructing of the protagonist and, consequently, in the development of the novel's theme. For him, Maugham's object is to make Strickland a detestable character but he ends up making him preposterous and grotesque. Obviously, the reason for giving his protagonist such characteristics has to do with his being a genius. But then the reviewer says he prefers to assume that there is no theory underlying Maugham's story in what concerns the way an artist works, although he believes there are people who think artists are supposed to be like Strickland. Such an assumption is related to the Victorian convention that "genius and art are rather attractively improper, and that a genius is justified in turning other people's happiness into misery and love into hate, so long as he contrives to turn yellow into green."

Anyway, the reviewer prefers to assume that Maugham is not dealing with such a kind of theory. In this case, the question remains: what is Maugham's objective with his novel? And here he repeats his criticism of the development of character and theme. If Maugham's intention was the drawing of a blackguard who daubs, he failed since he considers Strickland a lifeless character. If he meant a description of a pathological study of a perverted greatness he also failed. The misgivings Strickland causes, especially those to the Stroeve couple, could have been done by "any wretched little pseudo-artist." His conclusion then concerns the necessity Maugham found of drawing such a character as an artistic genius. No doubt, this is what he considers Maugham's greatest and unpardonable fault.

The last article on *The Moon and Sixpence* that appeared in 1919 was on the June edition of *The Bookman*, and was entitled "A Study in Sepia."¹⁶ It was written by J.P. Collins. Collins begins his article mentioning the exclamation of a character in one of Maugham's

plays. The character, which is not identified by the reviewer, says towards the end of the play: "I held up an ideal and they sneered at me. In this world you must wallow with the rest of them." Although he does not trace it, the relation between this exclamation and the life story of the protagonist in *The Moon and Sixpence* is rather obvious. Strickland is an idealist who refuses to wallow with the rest of his fellowmen. Besides, Collins uses this exclamation to mention the vivacity and wit which he identifies as characteristics of Maugham's novel.

For Collins, *The Moon and Sixpence* can be compared with *Liza of Lambeth* for its realism and its power. The only difference is that these are now developed into a maturity that is expressed in the writing and in its tone. In order to express the powerful effect of the novel on its readers, Collins says that the novel gives one the feeling that the narrator receives from Marseilles and its underworld. In the narrator's words: "I received the impression of a life intense and brutal, savage, multi-coloured, and vivacious."

Analyzing Strickland's breaking-away from his family and departure for Paris, Collins, unlike his other partners, considers it in accordance with his nature which he defines as unaccountable. Now, if he disagrees with his partners in this aspect, he agrees with them in what concerns the depiction of Strickland's art, which is unacceptable.

In summary, for him the novel "is a study of freakishness, told with a caustic cleverness of phrase, and a cold impartiality of outlook that is studied to a hair." Thus, he concludes saying that it is a masterpiece if taken as an essay in fiction with a biographic camouflage although he considers that "its human interest is thin."

As we could see the majority of the reviews of *The Moon and Sixpence* that appeared within the year of its publication was favorable. Although, as we have said above, Whitehead and Curtis suggest that the reason for Mansfield's unfavorable review was her missing the connection between the story of Strickland and Paul Gauguin, it is obvious that this assertion can also be applied to all those reviews which appeared soon after the publication of the novel. As we could see, none of them make reference to the fact that the story was drawn upon the actual events of the life of the French painter. On the other hand, if, at a first moment, the reviewers missed this connection, they did not miss the main theme of the novel: the description of an artistic soul, or, to use Maugham's expression, an artistic temperament. It is based on the satisfactory way Maugham handles this theme that most of them evaluate *The Moon and Sixpence*.

However, despite this almost unanimous approval of Maugham's handling of the theme in *The Moon and Sixpence*, most of its reviewers also share some disapproving criticism on some aspects of it. The first one is the lack of a deeper analysis of Strickland's psychological conflict before he decides to abandon his family and bolt to Paris. Maugham opted to show only the events of Strickland's life without presenting to his readers the agony of his inner conflict which he might have lived while he was still living in London as any other ordinary stockbroker. In the reviewers' approach to this, there always seems to be underlying the suggestion that Maugham makes an intentional use of the first-person narrative in order to be excused from providing a portrayal of Strickland's psychology.

This characteristic, or perhaps we should say failure, of Maugham's novel is so outstanding that it will be repeated in most of the later studies of *The Moon and Sixpence*. In his book *Maugham - A Reappraisal*, Whitehead asserts that Maugham has resorted at times to "vague rhetoric" and others to apologies in face of his inability to depict his protagonist as plausible as it was expected.¹⁷ In another study, *W. Somerset Maugham & The Quest for Freedom*, Calder asserts:

At the heart of the problem of Strickland's characterisation is Maugham's decision to abandon the omniscient author's point of view in favour of the first person singular. This narrative technique automatically absolves the author from the burden of explaining the subtle workings of his characters' minds, and Maugham significantly prefaces the story with the statement: 'It is a riddle which shares with the universe the merit of having no answer.' What he does attempt to present is a picture of a genius as he appears to the ordinary, but perceptive, observer. The result is an external view, with occasional suppositions and hypotheses about Strickland's mental and spiritual condition, and when the artist departs for Tahiti the impression becomes even more vague. Here the use of Conradian techniques of rumour and second- or third-hand accounts places Strickland even further away.¹⁸

Besides this problem with the characterization of Strickland, a second failure pointed out by several critics, and which certainly is derived from this same poor characterization of the protagonist, concerns the improbability of his behavior. For some critics, the easiness with which Strickland, as an already middle-aged man, abandons his family and goes to live in Paris, a city he had never visited before but to which he adapts so smoothly seems rather unconvincing. In the reviewers' understanding, a presentation of Strickland's psychological conflict before changing his life so radically would make such a change more plausible.

However, we can notice that for those reviewers who like *The Moon and Sixpence* these improbabilities become insignificant when the novel is seen as a whole. The best example of this is the first note on the novel that appeared in *The Athenaeum*. There, the reviewer even praises the "clever" manner with which Maugham handles these improbabilities. On the other hand, those reviewers, like Mansfield, who did not like the novel see these improbabilities as unacceptable in the construction of a fictional character.

Another criticism also related to the construction of the protagonist of *The Moon and Sixpence*, and which again is shared by almost all critics, concerns the depictions of Strickland's pictures. These are considered rather unsatisfactory in spite of the reactions of the narrator to them while Strickland was still in Paris and to Dr. Coutras's who saw his final masterpiece before it was burned down by Ata. Mansfield seems to summarize very well the reactions of the other reviewers when she says the descriptions offered in the novel could be equally applied "to a very large number of modern works."

Still another persistent criticism which underlies even those who are favorable concerns Strickland's amorality or, what some critics prefer to refer to as his "odiousness". In this aspect, it is interesting to mention the piece in *The Saturday Review* in which the critic asserts that "the question which Mr. Maugham asks and answers in these pages is how would the primitive man, who acknowledges no obligation to God or man or woman, who accepts no creed or code of ethics, bear himself to his fellows in his passage through life?" It is obvious that Maugham had the intention of making Strickland an amoral character. This was certainly supposed to emphasize the treatment of the theme of the conflict between society and the artist.

We can notice a clear difference in point of view in what concerns this characteristic of Strickland's. In the favorable reviews of *The Moon and Sixpence* this aspect was only explicitly mentioned *Punch*. For the critic of that periodical, Maugham knew how to work Strickland's odiousness in order to show his greatness. However, at the other extreme, we have Mansfield who does not accept the implicit association that Maugham makes between the entire fulfillment of one's artistic temperament and his necessity of being amoral. For her, Strickland can only be taken as a great artist as long as we consider being amoral as equal to being an artist.

In his study of Maugham's works, Anthony Curtis discusses Strickland's amorality not in terms of the artist-society conflict but the specific conflict between an amoral artist and the Edwardian society in which the novel appears. In this sense, he sees Mrs. Strickland and her brother, Colonel MacAndrew as representations of that social system. Following this interpretation, Curtis understands that Maugham pays tribute to that society's capacity to overcome the shock of Strickland's behavior and later on repair any damage done to its fabric.¹⁹

Another very important point made by Curtis which, obviously, was missed by all those reviewers at the time of publication of *The Moon and Sixpence* is that Strickland's conflict was a projection of Maugham's own conflict, or perhaps, conflicts. In a first moment, Curtis refers to this as a conflict between being a serious artist and a commercially successful one.²⁰ Obviously, Curtis is assuming that Maugham was aware of the damage that the success of his plays and novels could bring if he wanted to be taken as a great writer during his life time. Besides, as we already mentioned elsewhere above, Curtis also refers to what he calls the "artist-gentleman dilemma which in [Maugham's] his own life he never succeeded in resolving (...)." ²¹ We understand that the point Curtis is trying to make here is that, with the character of Strickland, Maugham was defending the necessity for the artist to break completely with his society and its code of ethics in order to achieve a complete fulfillment of his artistic temperament. However, this is something that he himself never dared to do in his own life. On the contrary, it seems that he was always careful to cultivate the public image of the perfect English gentleman whereas his private life was marked by a socially condemnable sexual relationship which he never made public. In this sense, it is not wrong to conclude this analysis saying that when writing *The Moon and Sixpence* Maugham seemed to be also guided by a cathartic necessity, as it happened to him when he wrote *Of Human Bondage*.

In making comments on the critical reception of *The Moon and Sixpence* based on Jauss's Reception Theory, the first thing that has to be mentioned is the title of the novel itself. As we have seen, it was borrowed from *The Times Literary Supplement* review of *Of Human Bondage* which evinces Maugham's attention to the reviewers' opinion on his books. Besides, it also evinces how the reception of a work might really influence the later production of an author.

In terms of the horizon of expectations in which *The Moon and Sixpence* appears, there are a few points that deserve some consideration. The first of these is the difficult theme

Maugham chose for his novel. The reviewers were almost unanimous to point out how difficult it is to attempt to portray an artistic soul in fiction. From the perspective of the aesthetics of reception, Maugham's greatest merit in the handling of this theme is that, in spite of the inherent difficulty it presents, he manages to establish communication with his reading public, especially with the ordinary readers. The *Punch* reviewer was especially emphatic on this achievement of Maugham's. In his view, the author of *The Moon and Sixpence* was able to make his readers accept the greatness of Strickland at his own valuation. Thus, Maugham's decision to approach a difficult theme was followed by his awareness that he had to go halfway in order to be receptive to his readers.

This merit of Maugham becomes even more significant when we take into consideration the kind of realism he uses in *The Moon and Sixpence*. No doubt Maugham is rather innovative in the development of realistic scenes in his novels. Using Jauss's terminology, we can say that there is an aesthetic distance between his kind of realism and that commonly practiced at that time.

But, in no way are the reviewers pleased with his innovations. We can say that his realism was "too realistic" for them. The main characteristic of his "excessive" realism is his treatment of certain subject matters in a way not usually dealt with in fiction. The reviewers' dissatisfaction reveals that the predominant notion was that there should be realism in exploiting the complexity of human nature in fiction. However, this does not mean it should be necessarily shown as it really is. In fact, the ultimate meaning of Maugham's attitude is an insistence on shocking late-Victorian morality.

Another very revealing element of *The Moon and Sixpence's* horizon of expectations is the reviewers' complaints about Maugham's psychological characterization of Strickland. There is a general dissatisfaction with his artifice of depicting his protagonist's mind only by means of his actions and short dialogues. The almost unanimous complaint of the reviewers about this aspect of Maugham's novel reveals that this was another important element of the predominant aesthetic values of that time.

To conclude, it should be made a particular reference to Mansfield's review. In a way, it confirms that misogyny is really a strong element within what we previously defined as Maugham's own horizon of expectations. Just like the unnamed *Athenaeum* reviewer, who analyzed *Of Human Bondage*, Mansfield keeps suggesting that Maugham was unfair in his

depiction of women characters whereas, in her understanding, his male characters always had a certain despise for women.

2. Revisiting the merry skeleton in the cupboard

After the publication of *The Moon and Sixpence* (1919), Maugham published *The Painted Veil*, in 1925, and in 1930 he published *Cakes and Ale* ²². In some sense, the story of one of the protagonists in this novel, Edward Driffield, can be seen as the reverse of that of Charles Strickland, the protagonist in *The Moon and Sixpence*. Just like Strickland, Driffield is also an artist, more specifically, a novel writer. Now, whereas Strickland breaks with the social and moral conventions of his society in order to fulfill his artistic potential, Driffield, although to some extent unwillingly, has the last years of his life and, after his death, some amoral and scandalous events of his past remodeled so that they can adapt to the figure of the Old Man of English Letters that he had embodied.

In order to have this objective achieved, it is necessary the complicity of Willie Ashenden, the narrator of the story, who is also a writer. Ashenden's complicity is sought by those directly involved and interested in the reconstruction of Driffield's past life, his second wife, Amy, and the writer who is in charge of composing his convenient biography, Alroy Kear. In his boyhood, Ashenden had been close to Driffield and his first wife, Rosie, when that writer was not yet a literary celebrity and lived in Blackstable, where Ashenden was brought up by an uncle and his wife.

Besides Ashenden's boyhood friendship with the Driffields, another more important reason hides behind Amy Driffield and Alroy Kear's interest in his complicity. It has to do with Rosie who, after Edward Driffield got a notoriety in the literary circles, became "the skeleton in the cupboard" of his life. With her spontaneity and artless behavior, Rosie had a liberal way of leading her life. Completely indifferent to the moral code of her time and society, for Rosie thought it was natural to have several different lovers at the same time, including Ashenden, while married to Driffield. Her promiscuity is depicted not as vice but rather as a natural extension of her artless nature. But, naturally, this is not the way Amy and Alroy Kear see it.

When the story begins, Edward Driffield is already dead and Rosie, who had eloped to the United States with a former lover, Lord George Kemp, is considered dead for the last ten years. It is Alroy Kear's request that Ashenden jot down all his memories related to the late Driffield that prompts his narration of the events involving the first Driffield couple. By making use of backward and forward movements from the present to the past and back to the present, the narrator tells these events involving the first Driffield couple while he also tells the maneuvers of Kear and Amy Driffield in the present to reconstruct Edward Driffield's past.

Although we can assume that the central theme of *Cakes and Ale* is this making of Edward Driffield into the Grand Old Man of English Letters, other themes equally prompted Maugham into the elaboration of this novel. As he himself says, he first thought of writing a short story based on the idea that he had been requested to write his reminiscences of a famous writer he had met in his boyhood. Then, he decided to include Rosie in this setting who, according to Robert Calder, was based on Ethelwyn Sylvia Jones²³, a woman Maugham much admired and loved in his youth. This however would demand a much longer story, something in the line of "Rain," one of his most successful and best-known short stories. Together with this desire to use the character of Rosie who had been long in his mind, Maugham also wanted to say something more about Whitstable, the town where he had been brought up, and also about his uncle and aunt, who had already been presented in *Of Human Bondage*. Putting all these elements together would demand the production of a novel instead of a long short-story.

It is especially this retaking of the events of his childhood in *Cakes and Ale* that makes Richard Cordell classify it as one of Maugham's three autobiographical novels together with *Of Human Bondage* and *The Moon and Sixpence*²⁴. However, there is a blatant difference between the way Maugham recalls his boyhood in Whitstable in *Of Human Bondage* and now in *Cakes and Ale*. Undoubtedly the predominant tone in the latter novel is much softer and less resentful. Commenting on this aspect of Maugham's novel, Anthony Curtis says that the ghosts of humiliation are already laid in it. What we have then is that Maugham's evocation of his childhood world "is both agreeably nostalgic and acute" in this novel.²⁵ In his view, this tone is also expanded on the description of other characters and setting in which the narrator gets involved.

It is the technique used by Maugham to interweave these three aforesaid themes, i.e., the reconstruction of a famous writer's past, the recollection of his boyhood and the construction of the character of Rosie, that brought him the praise of many critics and posterior scholars of his works. Through the recollections of the narrator, the story is told with movements from the present to the past and then back again to the present. In spite of this constant movement, Maugham manages to develop the three themes of the novel in a very masterly way.

Besides those three above-mentioned themes, two others of Maugham's favorite and recurrent themes permeate the plot of *Cakes and Ale*. The first one is an approach to the strong class-consciousness of the English people which, in the works studied hitherto, can also be detected in *Of Human Bondage*. The second one is an analysis of the English literary circles, a theme he had already drafted in *The Moon and Sixpence* with the character of Mrs. Strickland and her circle of artist friends. Obviously in *Cakes and Ale* it is more broadly developed in the narrator's description of Mrs. Barton Trafford and her literary group of friends. Besides, it is also explored in the description of the second Mrs. Drifffield's past life.

It is based on the treatment of this theme in *Cakes and Ale* that Curtis identifies it as part of a tradition of fiction about the profession of letters. According to him, this tradition begins with Thackeray's *Pendennis* (1850) and continues with George Gissing's *New Grub Street* (1891) and the tales about authorship by Henry James and Beerbohm. However, Curtis points out an important difference between the treatment of this theme by Gissing and by some other failed authors. They always make the point "that success can only be attained by a complete surrender of an individual's precious essence of honesty to the market forces boosting inferior work"²⁶ and "that failure and the preservation of integrity are synonymous."²⁷ As he suggests, Maugham follows the same kind of attack in his novel. However, the big difference between him and those former authors lies in the fact that at the time of publication of *Cakes and Ale* Maugham was experiencing the most successful phase of his writing career. Talking about his life at that time, Curtis says:

no author can have been less soured by failure than he was when he wrote *Cakes and Ale*. He was at the height of his post-First World War fame. The Kelly portraits and the photographs of him at this time show a brisk moustached, military-looking, middle-aged man, alert and in command. He had purchased the Villa Mauresque at Cap Ferrat in 1928, so that after separating from his wife, he and Gerald could live out of England in style when they were not on their travels. His plays were being performed and

revived all over the world; his short stories were appearing regularly in Hearst's *International Magazine* in America and Nash's in England. Translations of his books into foreign tongues were spreading the Maugham gospel far and wide. Critical appraisals of his fiction were beginning to appear in French and in Finnish. Whatever his motive in attempting to blow the gaff on the literary racket, it could hardly have been a sense of failure. The view from the terrace of his newly-acquired villa was a rosy one as far as his own future as a writer was concerned.²⁸

In face of those facts, Curtis cannot explain Maugham's decision on attacking the London literary circle. Perhaps, we can suggest, he was prompted by a sincere and unpretentious desire to make a serious analysis of the English literary life of his time without this necessarily meaning a feeling of resentment towards it. On the contrary, the fact that he was living a very successful moment in his career emphasizes his desinterestedness in this project.

Many Maugham scholars agree that *Cakes and Ale* was one of his best received novels. Calder asserts that it had immediate popular success, besides assuring him a prominent place in the critical estimation of that time. In his words,

(...) for a few months in the latter part of 1930, it was the most discussed, attacked, and defended, of contemporary fiction. The controversy which was initiated by its publication was continued by rumours, accusations and threats of lawsuits, so that for several decades its notoriety was maintained.²⁹

Certainly, Maugham's attack against the London literary establishment was one of the reasons for the rise of such a polemic atmosphere. However, two other elements in the novel had a more decisive contribution to provoke this situation. These are Maugham's allegedly drawing on Thomas Hardy for the creation of his character Edward Driffield and on the still living writer Hugh Walpole for the creation of the opportunist Alroy Kear. In the first case, Thomas Hardy admirers went on the attack for considering the representation of the Victorian writer depreciating. As for Hugh Walpole, he himself fought for a retraction on the part of Maugham.

Certainly, these polemics were positive in the sense of promoting Maugham's novels. However, as Ted Morgan points out, they deviated the critics' attention from the book's real merit to the polemics involving the two writers³⁰. This is obviously reflected in some of the criticism that appeared in the first year after its publication.

Among reviews and notes, twelve references to *Cakes and Ale* appeared in the English press in the year of its publication. But this is not the only fact to differentiate the reception of

Cakes and Ales from Maugham's previous novels here studied. Perhaps due to a change in the English literary world, most of the articles and reviews on Maugham's novel came signed. Ironically, among the exceptions is the first review that, once again, was published by *The Times Literary Supplement*. It appeared on its edition of October 2, 1919³¹.

The Times reviewer begins his article by saying that "if ever there was a novel which a novelist wrote to amuse himself it is *Cakes and Ale* by Mr. Somerset Maugham." The way the novel is structured explains why for the reviewer it is meant to amuse its own author. In his words, *Cakes and Ales* "is a story narrated in the first person by a novelist about another novelist whose life a third novelist had been asked to write by the second wife of the second novelist."

The reviewer lavishes praises on the novel's structure and construction of scenes and characters. As instances of its kind of scenes, he mentions the one in which Ashenden, the narrator, visits old Drifffield, now married to his second wife, together with a duchess and a novel-writing peer. During this visit, there is a moment in which Drifffield winks at Ashenden as a sign of their complicity on the past events of their lives. For the reviewer, "in that wink lies the whole sting of the book." Together with this scene, another that is worth *The Times* reviewer's mention is when Rosie becomes Ashenden's mistress. For him, this is a scene "described briefly, brilliantly, with just that touch of spade-calling that here, as elsewhere in certain sly remarks, betrays what Mr. Somerset is up to -". In a similar way, the reviewer sees the character of Alroy Kear as a natural part of the structure of the novel as are Drifffield and Rosie. The merit of this fact is that Kear is a present friend of Ashenden whereas Drifffield and Rosie are characters that we meet only through the narrator's recollections. Nonetheless, Maugham manages to weave him as a natural part of the story although he is living in a different time and place of theirs.

The last paragraph of his article the reviewer leaves for a consideration on the character of Ashenden, the narrator of the story which undoubtedly is meant to be ironical. The reviewer sees Ashenden as a sad fellow. The greatest evidence of his sadness is his meditations upon different subjects such as, among others, what the Americans think while they are talking, the ideal of beauty which *The Literary Supplement* stresses in its article on Drifffield, and the impossibility of learning anything useful in terms of literary craft in the books of Percy Lubbock, E.M. Forster and Mr. Edwin Muir. Certainly, the reviewer's

ultimate aim is to point out these points of view as rather belonging to the author who hides behind Ashenden, the narrator.

Two days after this first review of *Cakes and Ale* in the pages of *The Times Literary Supplement*, the second one appears, this time in *The Saturday Review*, on October 4, 1930³². In this review, which also comes unsigned, Maugham's novel is analyzed together with four others. Being also a favorable review, it begins asserting that "*Cakes and Ale* affords a very good example of a successfully handled narrative." For this reviewer, the subtlety of personal encounters of real life is well described in the novel thanks to Maugham's dramatist's eye. Maugham comes almost to real intimacy with his readers when describing his narrator's confrontation with Alroy Kear's overtures.

But the reviewer is especially pleased with the depiction of Alroy Kear. He sees as his merits his social dexterity as well as his solicitude for whitewashing the disreputable events of the past life of the late Edward Driffield in order to construe a noble one to satisfy the present Mrs. Driffield. In the reviewer's opinion, one of the best characteristics of Alroy Kear's depiction is that he is not presented as "Machiavellian nor as affecting in private the more nauseous forms of mock modesty."

Following this appreciation of the character of Alroy Kear, the next point in the review is the polemical question of trying to "identify" some novelists who certainly inspired Maugham for the creation of his characters, especially that of Edward Driffield. In this sense, he points out that the novel brings some clues that allow this identification. He points out two of them. The first one is Driffield's habit of, after having interesting people for lunch, going to a public-house and tell the plumber and baker what he thought of his guests. The second one is the narrator's consideration on longevity as a literary merit. Unhappily, in spite of giving these clues, the reviewer refrains from naming who could have inspired Maugham's character. But there is no doubt that he meant his readers to understand that Driffield had been drawn on Thomas Hardy. We should remember that Hardy was a still fresh memory in the mind of the reading public since he had died only two years before the publication of *Cakes and Ale*.

The last paragraph of the review is dedicated to a few considerations on the narrator's character where the reviewer finds an explanation for a weakness in the novel. For him, Ashenden's defect is not cheap cynicism but rather a sort of defensiveness of spirit which is masked behind his irony and reserve. Here lies the explanation for the absence of a depiction

of Edward Driffield's mental agony and desperation when Rosie elopes with Lord George to the United States. In this depiction, the reviewer can identify reminiscences of Maugham's play *Our Better*. For those people familiar with this comedy, the link is easily established. It also has as its main theme an elopement

A very different understanding of what is the main theme of *Cakes and Ale* is offered in its chronologically next review. This is the one that appeared on the October 5 edition of *Observer* which is entitled "Private Lives" and is signed by the critic, essayist, and journalist Ivor Brown³³. Since its very beginning, one can see that, according to Brown's analysis, the main theme of Maugham's novel is the revelation and, in a way, punishment of people for their sham. The sham, in this case, is the way one is led into celebrity in the English literary world. Maugham's punishment consists precisely in exposing the maneuvers of those involved in this kind of plotting. Needless to say, in *Cakes and Ale* the sham is the making of Edward Driffield into the figure of the Grand Old Man of English Letters. His greatest merit to make advance this enterprise is, more than his own oeuvre, his longevity. Besides his longevity, there is also another more serious sham in the way Driffield is made into the Grand Old Man of English Letters even after his death. It is the hiding of the real events of his past life, especially his first marriage to Rosie, and its retelling in a nobler way, i.e., nobler in accordance with the rigid morality of that society. As for the people to be punished, Maugham undoubtedly aims at those like Mrs. Barton Trafford who, by means of her influential manipulations, determines who will be celebrated and who will be rejected in the literary world. It is not necessary to say that also among those to be punished stand the second Mrs. Driffield and Alroy Kear.

Brown's suggestion that Maugham means to expose the sham of the people who constituted the London literary scene of his time is consistent with the identification of the characters which was made later by some scholars of Maugham's works. One of these was Calder who identifies almost all people on whom Maugham draws for the creation of his literary characters in *Cakes and Ale*. He says:

Cakes and Ale remains both a skilfully crafted study of freedom and vitality and a delicious satire about literary poseurs. (...) Mrs Barton Trafford and her husband were thinly disguised portraits of the Sidney Colvins, and the verbose, pompous critic Allgood Newton was based on Sir Edmund Gosse. Jasper Gibbons, a poet first championed and then dropped by Mrs Barton Trafford, is Stephen Phillips, whose reputation as a poet rose and fell equally dramatically. Among the minor sketches are undoubtedly other

figures recognizable to those intimately aware of Edwardian London's world of letters.³⁴

Of course, besides those we do not have to mention Drifffield and Kear who, as we have already said, were drawn on Thomas Hardy and Hugh Walpole, respectively.

The final paragraph of *The Observer* review is dedicated to some analysis of the characteristics of Maugham's style. Trying to avoid the hackneyed characterization of Maugham as "cynical," which he thinks Maugham does not deserve with *Cakes and Ale*, Brown, nevertheless, sees Maugham's commentary on life and letters as sardonic. He makes especial reference to the construction of the character of Alroy Kear which he sees as "a model of irony controlled." According to him, for all his disparaging depiction of Kear, Maugham does not mean to deny that he has stamina and perseverance and that he is industrious and benign. It is this kind of style that Brown has in mind when he says that Maugham's "style is a model of irony controlled."

In spite of this, but still based on the construction of Kear, Brown makes only one negative criticism on the way the story is developed. For him, Maugham stops too soon in his description of Kear's attempt to reconstruct Drifffield's life. We, readers, never come to know how successful he is in his enterprise. However, for Brown, this is not such serious a fault of Maugham because although "we are left suddenly in the air; [...] the air is Alpine in its power to sting and quicken and enchant."

The next article on *Cakes and Ale* was published in the *Daily Express* on its edition of October 7, 1930. This article, entitled "We should be proud of Somerset Maugham," is signed by Harold Nicolson³⁵. As the title suggests, before speaking specifically about *Cakes and Ale*, Nicholson makes some general considerations about the way Maugham is treated by the English literary circles.

To begin with, he says that in England there is a tendency to underestimate authors who make the public laugh. As an example of this, he mentions John Galsworthy. Galsworthy fails to be funny, which is compensated by his inducing the public to take him seriously. Although recognizing him as "a wholly deserving man," he understands Galsworthy "will live as an example of the unctuous futility of our age."

Before moving on in our analysis of Nicolson's article, we should see how these considerations about the English public and the authors who make them laugh relates to

Cakes and Ale. By making such considerations, Nicolson is indirectly referring to Maugham's comical depiction of Hugh Walpole in the character of Alroy Kear. To some extent, with this characterization, Walpole became the laughingstock of the London literary circle. The personal ordeal he had to go through is always described by Maugham scholars when analyzing *Cakes and Ale*. Let's see, for instance, how Calder refers to it:

Walpole's journal records the beginning of what was to be a painful ordeal. He went to a theatre, 'then home and, half-undressed sitting on my bed, picked up idly Maugham's *Cakes and Ale*. Read on with increasing horror. Unmistakable portrait of myself. Never Slept.' The next day, Walpole telephoned J. B. Priestley and, brushing aside Priestley's report that Maugham had denied that he had drawn Kear from an original, confessed that 'there are in one conversation the very accents of my voice.'³⁶

Perhaps an even funnier description of Walpole's mental agitation and comic behavior on account of Maugham's character is given by a famous friend of his. In a letter to her sister, Virginia Woolf tells her about a recent encounter she had had with Walpole:

He almost wept in front of Hilda Matheson, Vita and Clive, in telling us. And he couldn't stop. Whenever we changed the conversation he went back. 'There are things in it that nobody knows but Willie and myself' he said. 'There are little things that make me shudder. And that man has been my dearest friend for 20 years. And now I'm the laughing stock of London. And he writes to say he didn't mean it for me.' 'Oh but he undoubtedly did that' said Vita cheerfully. 'And he might have been jugged' said Hugh. 'You don't know the kind of life that Willie has led. I do. I could put him in a book. But then I call it a dastardly thing to do.' And so on, round and round, round and round, like a dog with a tin on its tail, till it was half past 12. Then he said it was all in the strictest confidence, and he had told no one else. But of course, Clive met Christable next night, and Christable had met Hugh that afternoon and had been ever so much more tactful than Vita.³⁷

Returning to Nicolson's article and his consideration on authors who are, or are not, taken seriously, he says he does not feel bitter about Galsworthy. However, he says he does about Somerset Maugham. Apparently, when Nicolson uses the word "bitter" he means "sad" or "sorry." Thus, his real intention is to say he does not feel sorry about Galsworthy's literary reputation but he does about Maugham. His next remarks on Maugham confirm this interpretation. He says that Maugham is a man that any nation might feel proud of. Nonetheless, it is not so in England. All that is said about him, according to Nicolson, is "So brilliant, such a clever man, but after all....," a sentence which should be completed with "but after all he does write harshly, doesn't he?"

As an example of Maugham's merits, Nicolson points out *Of Human Bondage* (which, in fact, he names *Human Bondage* only). Maugham's novel, in his view, is one of the few books published in the last twenty years which can be considered important. However, he refrains from attributing the same adjective to *Cakes and Ale*. Instead he prefers to call it "amazingly adroit."

However, this does not prevent him from favorably comparing it to a firework. In this sense, he asserts he had seldom witnessed "a firework more brilliant, more satisfying, more provocative than '*Cakes and Ale*'." Although he does not say it, Nicolson is certainly basing his comparison on the repercussion of Maugham's novel, especially his possible resort to public figures on whom he might have drawn for his characters. Defending Maugham from the accusation of having drawn on Thomas Hardy, Nicolson says:

Mr. Selfridge does not find it necessary to pilfer from his own counter. Mr. Maugham does not find it necessary to go to Madame Tussaud for his characters. And apart from all that, the centre of the book, its essential theme, is not Edward Driffield.

Dislocating Edward Driffield from the center of the book, Nicolson understands that the main theme of Maugham's novel is rather "the strange behaviour of shallow characters when faced with a genius." In other words, as he himself says, *Cakes and Ale* "is a study of intellectual snobbishness."

With assertions like this, it is more than obvious Nicolson's intention of defending Maugham from the attacks he received at the time of the publication of *Cakes and Ale* on account of his allegedly drawing on Thomas Hardy. However, it is also obvious that he is not as familiar with Maugham's oeuvre as he expects his readers to understand. As we can see, out of all Maugham's works the only one he mentions is *Of Human Bondage* which was probably the best known of his works at that time. We should remember that when studying it we saw that ten years after its publication it was already considered a modern classic. But, were Nicolson familiar with other works such as, for instance, *The Moon and Sixpence*, he would know that Maugham did sometimes go "to Madame Tussaud for his characters." As we saw, for using many facts of the life of Paul Gauguin to create its protagonist Charles Strickland, Maugham's novel was even taken as a biography of the French painter. What we have then in Nicholson's article is an honest and well-meaning defense of Maugham although the arguments he uses are rather fragile.

Four days after this review on *The Daily Express*, *The New Statesman* published a note on *Cakes and Ale* on its column "Shorter Notices."³⁸ The bulk of this short note is that Maugham was successful in what concerns the structuring of his novel, but not similarly successful in the handling of its theme. The very first sentence summarizes all the critic has to say about it: "Mr. Maugham has rarely written a more expert story than this; but the thinness of his theme is not concealed by his dexterity." By the summary *The New Statesman* critic makes of Maugham's novel, we can deduce he does not share the *Daily Express* critic's point of view on what concerns the main purport of the novel. Rather than a study of intellectual snobbishness, as Nicolson proposes, it is the manipulation of people connected to the late Driffield in order to make him a respectful Grand Old Man of English Letters. Retaking his first assertion, the critic ends his note saying again that although the story is told with wit and unflinching intelligence, the theme lacks profundity.

After *The New Statesman* article, it was *Graphic* that brought the next review of *Cakes and Ale* on its edition of October 15, 1930. This article is entitled "The Books You Read" and is signed by the novelist Evelyn Waugh³⁹. Waugh begins his article talking about the excitement that the figure of Edward Driffield was provoking in the London literary circles due to its possible drawing on the novelist Thomas Hardy. He suggests that the main suspicion is based on the fact that Driffield holds a position very similar to that of the author of *Tess of The D'Urbervilles* in the years before his death. By that time Hardy was the Grand Old Man of English Letters and the last great Victorian novelist.

In face of all this excitement, Waugh presents his own point of view on this polemical aspect of *Cakes and Ale*. In his view, for anyone who is familiar with the events of the life of Thomas Hardy, there is no possibility of taking Driffield for Hardy. Besides, by that time Maugham himself had published a denial of his drawing on the life of Hardy. Waugh, in a very categorical way, says that for any intelligent person that's where this polemic ends.

Waugh makes use of this polemic to weave some digression on the inconveniences of such kind of attributions to an author. For him, they constitute not just a nuisance but a danger. Unhappily, Waugh is not specific about the danger involved in this kind of attitude from the public. Demonstrating an irritation about other people's curiosity on a novelist's creative process, he says "no one, not even the novelist himself, can follow the processes by which personal experience is transformed into impersonal, artistic creation." Concluding his digression, he says that to question Maugham about the person who inspired his creation is

more than an embarrassment, it can even be an insult. Not only for being a writer himself, but also because of the tone he used in Maugham's defense, we can suppose that Waugh's irritation is probably the result of a similar experience he might have gone through.

Putting aside this discussion, Waugh concentrates on the intrinsic merits of *Cakes and Ale*. Either as a necessity of conforming to his previous assertion about the polemic involving Maugham's novel or out of an honest analysis of it, Waugh asserts that "its real interest and value lie in the manner and method of its construction, rather than upon its subject." Regardless of Waugh's real motivation for saying that, we can see that this is a characteristic of *Cakes and Ale* which had already been noticed by the reviewer of *The New Statesman*. In Waugh's words Maugham's way of working is characterized by a supreme adroitness and ease and 'poise.' To these attributes, he adds that he does not know of "any living writer who seems to have his work so much *under control*."

Nonetheless, in the sequence of his criticism, Waugh makes clear that he does not consider that control a perfect success. It has advantages but also disadvantages. For him, the advantages of such a control is that Maugham is never boring or clumsy, he never gives a false impression and is never shocking. On the other hand, the disadvantages, or limitations, of such procedure are the lack of what Waugh calls "transcendent flashes of passion and beauty." These flashes, according to Waugh, are something that even less competent novelists occasionally attain. Quoting a passage from the novel itself in which the narrator says that "beauty is a bit of a bore," Waugh suggests that that was also Maugham's attitude when writing. Thus, he does not hesitate to assert that Maugham does not even try or desire anything of the kind of that transcendence.

Waugh proceeds with his analysis making a summary of the novel's plot which he considers a simple story that could be transformed into a novel thanks to Maugham's brilliant technical dexterity. In his analysis, Waugh identifies two technical devices used by Maugham in the construction of his novel. The first one is his creating the appetite for information, his withholding it until the right moment, and then providing it in a surprising way. The second device he identifies is Maugham's movement from past to present with occasional digressions on different topics such as an analysis of literary humbug, Ashenden's upbringing in Blackstable, or just a description of a love scene.

After Waugh's analysis of *Cakes and Ale*, its next review appeared on the pages of *The Spectator*, on its edition of October 18, 1930. In this periodical, V.S. Pritchett makes a short review of Maugham's novel together with four others. Hence its title "Five Established Novelists"⁴⁰. Connecting his task of reading five novels of established writers in a single weekend, Pritchett starts analyzing *Cakes and Ale* saying it was a relief to his obligation. This relief consists precisely in the fact that Maugham's novel exposes in an ironical way "the humbug and nonsense which is talked about established authors." After saying that artists are usually taken either with soulful intensity, which makes them to a certain extent unbelievable creatures, or, on the other hand, as any ordinary tradesmen, which makes one doubt they wrote what they did, Pritchett says Maugham took the second approach in order to tell the story of Edward Driffield. In this sense, the attempts of his second wife to hide the disreputable events of her late husband become perfect material for a comedy. However, Pritchett points out as the best part of the novel the narrator's affair with Driffield's first wife which, in his view, is "a masterly and sane piece of work and a delightful piece of characterization."

In spite of these praises, Pritchett closes his short review of *Cakes and Ale* pointing out what he considers to be its failures. First of all, he says, without any further consideration, that in Maugham's style there is a sense of coolness and malice. Besides, the movements to and from the past in the novel's plot are, in his view, rather mechanical.

In its edition of October 25, 1930, *The Nation & Athenaeum* brought the next review of *Cakes and Ale*. Here, Kathleen C. Tomlinson, in the column entitled *New Novels*, reviews Maugham's novel together with seven others⁴¹. In the very first paragraph of her review, Tomlinson tries to make a generalization about those eight books she is dealing with. In her own words, "sex without love, a mental, furtive excitement without obligation, without compassion, without dignity, is in one form or another either the theme or the outstanding episode in most of these novels." Somewhere else in her article she will point out that this kind of novel is the result of those days of mass production. By such an assertion we can already see that her review of the eight novels, including Maugham's, will be inevitably negative.

When speaking specifically about *Cakes and Ale*, Tomlinson, like Waugh in his review, also suggests that the polemic involving Maugham's drawing on Thomas Hardy's life was the most discussed literary topic of the moment. Although asserting that Maugham's

novel has cleverness, this does not prevent her from seeing it as a "confession of lack of creative gift." Her reason for thinking so is that she understands Maugham uses a simple formula in order to create his novel. This formula would consist in taking a known fine character, making it obvious who this character is and, then, inventing, with deliberate belittlement, about this character's life.

More than just Maugham's novel, Tomlinson is also criticizing what she understands to be his creative process, or better say, his lack of it. Her use of the word "formula" leaves no doubt that for her Maugham used no artistic talent in writing *Cake and Ale* but just followed a pre-determined formula which would ensure its success.

Proceeding with her analysis, Tomlinson reveals what she thinks is another reason for Maugham's writing *Cakes and Ale*: his envy of well-celebrated authors. We can easily perceive that Tomlinson is convinced that, moved by a great sense of his incapacity and envious spirit, he based his character Drifffield on Thomas Hardy's life with the intention of denigrating the latter. As she suggests, Maugham's attitude is reflected in the narrator of the story, whom she sees as "a not too successful author" "who is envious of the financial successes of the best-sellers and the big reputation of the great writers." Her judgment of the narrator's personality goes further. Taking as an example Ashenden's visit to the old Drifffield, she sees Maugham's depiction of him as "a perfect type of cad," someone who "makes no pretence to be a man of taste, honour, or anything."

Such a review leaves no doubt that Kathleen Tomlinson is one of those Hardy admirers who got offended with the character of Drifffield. There is no doubt that, instead of a serious and professional analysis of *Cakes and Ale*, she was interested in attacking its author and take vengeance on what she considered Hardy's insulted memory. We can take this as the explanation for the lack of any kind of comment on either the structure of the novel or its technique.

After Tomlinson's article, the next review of *Cakes and Ale* appeared in *Punch*, on its edition of October 29, 1930. In a similar way to *The Spectator* reviewer, *Punch's* also begins by speaking of his anticipated pleasure whenever he picks up a book by Maugham. One of the reasons for such pleasure is Maugham's characteristic "urbane acidity of temper" and this quality, he says, can be found in plenty in Maugham's new novel. Although not mentioning

any other of Maugham's novels, he says this is not his best work. Actually, he considers it a trifle but, he adds, "a very entertaining trifle."

The review begins with some considerations about the theme of *Cakes and Ale* and with a comparison between it and another novel which deals with a similar theme. In her book *Legend*, Miss Clemence Dane also approaches the contrast between a distinguished writer as he really was and the way he is presented to the reading public through his biography. However, the method adopted by both authors is very different. According to the *Punch* reviewer, Dane's style was intensive and intense whereas Maugham's is discursive. Besides, he says Maugham is also, if not disreputable, at least the cause of disreputability in others.

However, for the reviewer neither Maugham's discursive passages nor the disreputable events of the novel is its main theme. This is rather a sharp attack on the London literary circles. In his words, Maugham's main objective is "to get his sharp little stiletto into the bladder of literary snobbery." This would be the only "deadly sin" which he means to attack.

Finally, revealing an awareness of the polemic involving the public figures depicted in the novel, he concludes his review making an allusion to Maugham's possible drawing on other writers in order to create his characters. For him, there is no reason for any living writer to feel offended by Maugham's satire. The same, however, could not be said about dead ones. According to the reviewer, there is more than one dead writer who would stir uneasily in his/her grave if they could read *Cakes and Ale*.

It was in the November edition of *The Bookman* that appeared the next review of *Cakes and Ale*. This review, which is signed by E.H., also analyzes the novel "A Woman on Her Way" by the dramatist John Van Druten. Hence, it is entitled "Dramatists' Novels - Maugham and Van Druten"⁴².

This is a very favorable review of *Cakes and Ale*. As we can notice, one of the reasons for this favorable view of *Cakes and Ale* is that E.H. puts it in contrast with the modern novel. Making a general consideration on modern fiction, E.H. says that one expects from the novel of expert playwrights a nicer sense of form and proportion than is offered by ninety percent of modern fiction. Needless to say he is attributing a great merit to Maugham as a novelist. But E.H. is still more specific about the qualities expected of a playwright: neat handling of a story; sharp definition of a character and knowledge of the right moment for revealing a new essential fact. These qualities, according to E.H., stand out in Maugham's novel. In other

words, it is precisely because he keeps and exercises his "sense of the theatre" that Maugham is so successful with *Cakes and Ale*.

In his brief considerations on the structure and characters of the novel, E.H. gives special emphasis to the depiction of Rosie Driffield. For him, her creation as a sympathetic character is a surprise if one takes into consideration the constant criticisms Maugham receives for his cynical and unsympathetic portraits of women. Through this sympathetic creation of Rosie, E.H. tries some speculation on Maugham's personality. For him, Maugham's dexterous creation of Rosie "gives color to the theory that if you scratch a cynic you will find a sentimentalist."

Following E.H.'s article, we have the last review of *Cakes and Ale* which was published on the December edition of *The Adelphi Supplement* and is signed by R.R. and, like that of *The Bookman* review, it is also very favorable⁴³. Trying to make an evaluation of Maugham's literary career, its author, based on the present novel and two plays he had seen, says that "the stage diminishes and the novel-form enhances [Maugham's] charm," although he considers him a master of both crafts.

After presenting a short summary of the novel's plot, R.R. traces some considerations on its theme and style. He identifies *Cakes and Ale* as part of a growing tendency which means to "boost"- to use his word - literature by personal and irrelevant interests together with digestible literary tit-bits. In this context, Maugham's novel differentiates from others that deal with a similar theme. For R.R., Maugham's treatment of the theme is more elaborate and refined.

Using medical terms to speak of the novel's style, R.R. says, "Mr. Somerset Maugham here administers a corrective dose which will be welcomed by discriminating palates and strong stomachs." As for Maugham's cynicism he considers it refreshing rather than nauseating; the brusquely professional manner which makes some parts of the book dry "is balanced by the sense of character and situation which gives to other parts a charm that is rare in degree and individual in kind."

There is an aspect in all those above reviews that we have shown which differentiates them from those of the other novels we have dealt with hitherto. This aspect is the fact that in most of these reviews there is reference not only to the theme, or themes of *Cakes and Ale*, but also to its structure. There is no doubt that in this novel, more than in any of his previous

works, Maugham paid more attention to form than to the story-telling. Or, perhaps, we could say that he paid equal attention to both of them. There is also no doubt that he was quite successful in his enterprise since, as we have already said, almost all of his later scholars consider *Cakes and Ale* his best novel.

The time it was published, the year of 1930, was a time when experimentalism in form was still taken as an important serious criterion in the definition of a good novel. Although we cannot exactly say there is formal experimentalism in *Cakes and Ale*, it has a structure which is rather elaborate. Unhappily, as Ted Morgan points out, the polemic involving Maugham's depiction of some public figures drew the attention of the literary community away from its other merits⁴⁴. In their haste either to defend the memory of Thomas Hardy, or defend Maugham from those attacks on this account, some critics, like Kathleen Tomlinson, overlooked the intrinsic merits of the book and in their analysis concentrated basically on its author. Actually, in the specific case of Tomlinson, we could see that she is so severe in her attack that she even questions Maugham's artistic capacity. As we could see, for her what he did was just to use a "formula" to write his novel and make it successful. On the other hand, we have Evelyn Waugh who, in an opposite direction, goes to the same length in his defense of Maugham. For him, it is even insulting to keep questioning the creative process of a writer.

In spite of the polemic that *Cakes and Ale* raised and its elaborate structure, once again Maugham did not escape from the accusation of lack of profundity. Especially two critics make this point very clearly. First we have *The New Statesman* reviewer who likes the way Maugham tells his story, but misses a profundity in the way he handles it. Secondly, we have Evelyn Waugh again in *Graphic* who, after a serious and honest defense of Maugham as a novelist, recognizes in *Cakes and Ale* an excessive control by the narrator which prevents him from having "transcendent flashes of passion and beauty." Perhaps, we could also include in this list Ivor Brown, the *Observer* critic. Although he does not exactly accuse Maugham of lack of profundity, he understands that the main theme of the novel, Kearsley's reconstruction of Drifffield's life, is stopped too soon. He is disappointed because we never know how Kearsley carried out his enterprise. Significantly, he finishes his analysis of the novel's themes by saying that our final experience is that "we are left suddenly in the air (...)"

There is no doubt that *Cakes and Ale* is Maugham's novel which best satisfies the horizon of expectations in which it appears, although it should be said it was a satisfaction with reservations. Undoubtedly the main reason for that satisfaction is its narrative structure.

There is much more elaboration and complexity in the way the events are arranged in *Cakes and Ale* than in any other of Maugham's previous novels. As we have said above, that was a time of experimentalism in form. Consequently, Maugham's break with linear and chronological narrative was especially welcome. In terms of Maugham's own career, this means the achievement of a complete mastery of a literary technique on which he had been working since his first book.

But, as we could see, there was another very strong reason for such a large critical reception of *Cakes and Ale*. It also drew much attention because of Maugham's drawing on some literary personages of that time, especially on Thomas Hardy. As far as we can deduce from Maugham's declaration, he did not mean his novel to be so polemical on that account. Although by that time he was already known for his sensibility to apprehend his reading public's taste, the polemic *Cakes and Ale* raised was unintentional.

Perhaps not so unintentional was Maugham's description, or better to say, attack against the London literary world. His exposition of the manipulations to promote a writer into notoriety or just put aside another was certainly an element to catch the attention to his novel.

Regardless of which was the main reason for its large critical reception, it is interesting to notice how *Cakes and Ale* brought atonement for some of Maugham's past literary "sins." The fact that he was able to produce a novel with a complex narrative structure redeems him from having produced popular drama in the past. At least two reviewers mention Maugham's plays not as a negative or low-quality production but rather as the experience which has enabled him to elaborate the narrative structure of *Cakes and Ale*.

If, on one hand, the critical reception of *Cakes and Ale* brings redemption from his past, there is the reinforcement of some characteristics of what we have above called Maugham's own horizon of expectations. Actually, some reviewers make a point in citing these characteristics since in *Cakes and Ale* Maugham breaks with some of them.

The first of these characteristics is Maugham's cynicism. In his review, Ivor Brown suggests that the rule for Maugham is to have a cynical point of view in his works. In the context of his fictional production, *Cakes and Ale* becomes the exception. With this novel, his author does not deserve to be called cynic.

The second characteristic is misogyny. For E.H., *The Bookman* reviewer, Rosie is an exception in the gallery of Maugham's female characters. Her characterization contrasts with Maugham's usual unsympathetic portraits of women.

A third characteristic of Maugham's horizon of expectations, but with which he does not break in *Cakes and Ale* is the lack of psychological profundity of his characters. This was a characteristic much emphasized in the reception of *The Moon and Sixpence*. Maugham's refusal to dive into the mind of his characters was in accordance with his principle that literature was not the place for the discussion of ideas. So, this was a particular characteristic of Maugham's literary production that ran counter the predominant characteristics of the horizon of expectations in which his novels appear.

Although *Cakes and Ale* is Maugham's novel that, out of those we have so far analyzed, had the best critical reception, this does not mean it was spared some sharp attack. Regardless of the great attention it received and of its author's mastery of its narrative structure, *Cakes and Ale* apparently still lacks something of a great novel. Evelyn Waugh and Kathleen Tomlinson are especially emphatic on this point in their review. They suggest there is a lack of creativity and spontaneity in Maugham's novel. In other words, Maugham does not allow his fictional world to become independent and have a life of its own. His mistake is to insist on keeping control over everything that happens there.

Now, after seeing the way *Cakes and Ale* was received by the English reviewers and critics, we should try to compare it with that of *The Moon and Sixpence*. In general, it would not be wrong to say that these two novels, produced in Maugham's phase of highest achievement, had a similar kind of reception. Taking a closer look at their respective reception we can notice some similarities and differences between them.

To begin with, we should notice that both *The Moon and Sixpence* and *Cakes and Ale* have characters drawn on famous real persons but that the effect of this on their reception was widely different. The fact that Charles Strickland was based on Paul Gauguin was unnoticed by the first reviewers of *The Moon and Sixpence*. Even if they had known it, certainly it would have not been so polemical as it was in *Cakes and Ale*. Besides being dead for a long time at the time Maugham's novel was published, Gauguin was neither English nor had ever lived in England. So, any reaction to his fictional depiction would never have been like that provoked by Thomas Hardy's and Hugh Walpole's depiction in *Cakes and Ale*. Unhappily,

the overreaction of some reviewers made them overlook the literary merits of it. The unhappiest fact about this was this overreaction of some critics and also of Thomas Hardy fans which, to some extent, overshadowed the literary merits of *Cakes and Ale* at the time of its publication.

Regardless of this drawing on real people, there also predominates a satisfaction with the way the theme of both novels is developed. In the specific case of *Cakes and Ale*, this development is helped by a complex and elaborate narrative structure. Here, the reviewers are unanimous in their praising.

But, of course, it is not only praises that *The Moon and Sixpence* and *Cakes and Ale* share. They also received some common negative criticism. As an instance, we can mention the accusation of lack of profundity in the depiction of their protagonists. In the case of *The Moon and Sixpence*, its reviewers missed the description of Strickland's conflict while still a stockbroker in London. More than just a mere description of the protagonist's mental agony, the importance of his conflict lies in that it is what leads him to the unconventional kind of life whose narration constitutes the very bulk of the novel's plot. Likewise, the reviewers also missed a better presentation of Edward Drifffield, especially his conflict after Rosie's elopement with Lord George Kemp.

In refusing to present the psychology of his characters, especially that of the protagonists, Maugham was obviously running counter one of the most valued literary artifices of Modernism. Needless to say that, still in accordance with the predominant modernist vogue, with such an attitude he was not being innovative.

However, Maugham's attitude can be explained by the epigraph opening this chapter. As we could see, he was totally against the discussion of ideas in fiction and this is what was implied in the reviewers' demand for a psychological presentation of his characters. In other words, this kind of presentation would necessarily mean the use of one of the modern psychological or philosophical theories in evidence.

Maugham's could be taken as a rather conservative and opportunistic attitude. But seeing it from the perspective of the aesthetics of reception, we come to a very different conclusion. Certainly, the use of modern philosophical and psychological theories would make the depiction of his characters deeper. On the other hand, this would also take him further away from his readers. After all, we should see that it is also in the same book from where we have taken the epigraph in the beginning of this chapter, *Ten Novels and Their*

Authors, that he still insists on his conception of literature. At a certain point, he says “I cannot repeat too often that a novel is not to be read for instruction or edification, but for intelligent enjoyment, and if you find you cannot get this from it you had far better not read it at all.”⁴⁵

It is obvious that for Maugham “intelligent enjoyment” does not necessarily mean the use of complicated theories in fiction. Besides, it is also obvious that his main concern was his ordinary reader rather than pleasing a small literary clique.

However, we have to notice that Maugham did not entirely submit his novels to all the expectations of his readers. He does break through them but in a different aspect: the questioning of their social morality. In *The Moon and Sixpence* and *Cakes and Ale*, this questioning is evident in his creation of two amoral characters, namely, Charles Strickland and Rosie, and, at the same time, his intention of making them sympathetic in the eyes of his readers. It is such an approach to the moral conventions of his time that prevents Maugham’s novels from being easily pushed into the category of “culinary art” as defined by Jaus in his theory.

NOTES:

¹ W. Somerset Maugham, *The Moon and Sixpence*, 1919 (London: Mandarin Paperbacks, 1997).

² John Whitehead, *Maugham - A Reappraisal* (London: Vision and Barnes & Noble, 1987) 13.

³ In spite of this, surprisingly, some scholars of Maugham's works classify *The Moon and Sixpence* as an autobiographical novel. In *Somerset Maugham - A Biographical and Critical Study* (London: Heinemann, 1961), Cordell classifies it as one of his three autobiographical novels together with *Of Human Bondage* and *Cakes and Ale*. Some of the autobiographical elements he points out in *The Moon and Sixpence* are the narrator's reference to his uncle's home in 'Blackstable,' his own lodgings in London, and his trips abroad. Besides, Strickland's tirades against women would reflect Maugham's misogyny.

⁴ Whitehead 80-81.

⁵ Anthony Curtis, *The Pattern of Maugham* (London: The Quality Book Club, 1975) 98-99.

⁶ Curtis 254.

⁷ "New Novels." Rev. of *The Moon and Sixpence*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *The Times Literary Supplement*, 24 April, 1919, c: 224.

⁸ "Of Human Bondage." Rev. of *Of Human Bondage*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *The Times Literary Supplement*, 12 Aug. 1915, c: 269. In his book (*W. Somerset Maugham & The Quest for Freedom*. London: Heinemann, 1972.), Robert Calder quotes a passage where Maugham explains the title of the novel: "Since some readers of this novel have found its title obscure the author ventures upon the following explanation. In his childhood he was urged to make merry over the man who, looking for the moon, missed the sixpence at his feet, but having reached years of maturity he is not so sure that this was so great an absurdity as he was bidden to believe. Let him who will pick up the sixpence, to pursue the moon seems the most amusing diversion." (p. 147).

⁹ "Fiction." Rev. of *Of Human Bondage*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *The Athenaeum*, 25 April 1919: 254.

¹⁰ "Books of the Day – *The Moon and Sixpence*." Rev. of *Of Human Bondage*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *The Observer*, 4 May 1919: 4.

¹¹ "Our Booking-Office." Rev. of *The Moon and Sixpence*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *Punch*, 7 May 1919, CLVI: 371.

¹² Katherine Mansfield, "Inarticulations." Rev. of *The Moon and Sixpence*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *The Athenaeum*, 09 May 1919: 302.

¹³ Anthony Curtis and John Whitehead, *W. Somerset Maugham - The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1987) 139.

¹⁴ "The Primitive Man." Rev. of *The Moon and Sixpence*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *The Saturday Review*, 17 May 1919, CXXVII: 481-482.

¹⁵ "The Modern Artist." Rev. of *The Moon and Sixpence*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *The Nation*, 31 May 1919: 274, 276.

¹⁶ J.P. Collins, "A Study in Sepia." Rev. of *The Moon and Sixpence*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *The Bookman*, June 1919: 116.

¹⁷ Whitehead 81.

¹⁸ Calder, *W. Somerset Maugham and The Quest for Freedom*, 3.

¹⁹ Curtis 101.

²⁰ Curtis 103.

²¹ Curtis 254.

²² W. Somerset Maugham. *Cakes and Ale*. 1930. (London: Penguin Books, 1988).

²³ Calder, *W. Somerset Maugham and The Quest for Freedom*, 192.

²⁴ Richard Cordell, "Three Autobiographical Novels," in *Somerset Maugham - A Biographical and Critical Study* (London: Heinemann, 1961) 68-110.

²⁵ Curtis, *The Pattern of Maugham*, 141.

²⁶ Curtis 142.

²⁷ Curtis 142.

²⁸ Curtis 142.

²⁹ Calder, *W. Somerset Maugham & The Quest for Freedom*, 173.

³⁰ Ted Morgan, *Somerset Maugham* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1980) 344.

³¹ "Cakes and Ale." Rev. of *Cakes and Ale*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *The Times Literary Supplement*, 02 Oct. 1930, b: 778.

³² "New Novels." Rev. of *Cakes and Ale*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *The Saturday Review*, 04 Oct. 1930, CL, 3910: 409.

³³ Ivor Brown, "Private Lives." Rev. of *Cakes and Ale*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *The Observer*, 05 Oct. 1930. *The Critical Heritage*. ed. Curtis and Whitehead 185-187.

³⁴ Robert Calder, *Willie - The Life of W. Somerset Maugham* (London: Heinemann, 1989) 216.

³⁵ Harold Nicholson, "We should Be Proud of Somerset Maugham." Rev. of *Cakes and Ale*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *Daily Express*, 07 Oct. 1930: 06.

³⁶ Calder, *W. Somerset Maugham & The Quest for Freedom*, 175-6.

³⁷ Calder, *Willie - The Life of W. Somerset Maugham*, 217.

³⁸ "Shorter Notices." Rev. of *Cakes and Ale*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *New Statesman*, 11 Oct. 1930, XXXVI: 28.

³⁹ Evelyn Waugh, "The Books You Read." Rev. of *Cakes and Ale*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *Graphic*, 15 Oct. 1930, CXXVII: 426.

⁴⁰ V. S. Pritchett, "Five Established Novelists." Rev. of *Cakes and Ale*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *The Spectator Literary Supplement*, 18 Oct. 1930, CXLV: 554.

⁴¹ Kathleen C. Tomlinson, "New Novels." Rev. of *Cakes and Ale*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *Nation & The Athenaeum*, 25 Oct. 1930, XLVIII, 4: 140.

⁴² E.H., "Dramatists' Novels - Maugham and Van Druten." Rev. of *Cakes and Ale*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *The Bookman*, Nov. 1930, 79: 155.

⁴³ R.R., "*Cakes and Ale*." Rev. of *Cakes and Ale*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *The Adelphi Supplement*, Dec. 1930, 1,3: xxx-xxxi.

⁴⁴ Morgan, 344.

⁴⁵ W. Somerset Maugham, *Ten Novels and Their Author* (London: Heinemann Ltd., 1954) 201

THE RECEPTION OF *THE RAZOR'S EDGE* AND *CATALINA*

In one way or another I have used in my writings whatever has happened to me in the course of my life.

Sometimes an experience I have had has served as a theme and I have invented a series of incidents to illustrate it; more often I have taken persons with whom I have been slightly or intimately acquainted and used them as the foundation for characters of my invention.

(W. Somersert Maugham)

1. *Trying to cut off the mysteries of life*

*The Razor's Edge*¹ is usually considered Maugham's first major novel to be published after *Cakes and Ale*. Between them there appeared five other novels, which were *The Narrow Corner* (1932); *Theatre* (1937); *Christmas Holiday* (1939); *Up at the Villa* (1941); and *The Hour Before the Dawn* (1942). *The Razor's Edge* was written while Maugham was staying in the United States during the Second World War. He had gone to live there after the capitulation of France to the German military forces. Besides staying away from the war, there was another purpose for Maugham's permanence in the United States. He had the mission of trying to influence American public opinion towards the participation of the U.S. in the conflict that was taking place in Europe.

While staying there and under the request of the Ministry of Information of his country, Maugham published, as part of this propaganda mission, several articles on the war effort in Europe and the novel called *The Hour Before the Dawn*, which meant to arise the sympathy of the public by depicting the ordeal faced by a typical English family during those war days. Having in mind the specific objective of this novel, Maugham was negligent of its aesthetic aspect. He was so ashamed of this novel's literary value that he never allowed its

publication in England during his lifetime. When finally the US entered the war, Maugham considered his mission finished and could, then, dedicate time to the project of a novel that had been in the back of his mind for a long time. In order to carry out this project he established himself in South Carolina, in a little house provided to him by his American editor, Doubleday.

Although written in 1942, Maugham began to conceive *The Razor's Edge* when he visited India in 1938. In order to gather more material for his novel it was his intention to visit that country again in the winter of 1939-40. However, the development of the international situation prevented him from doing so.

To be more precise, Maugham's plans to write *The Razor's Edge*, were not only the result of his 1938 visit to India. In fact, as Richard Cordell reveals, it was the vehicle he used "to restate many observations on religion, evil, God, punishment, and spiritual exaltation that he had been entering in his notebooks during the preceding fifty years."² In fact, Maugham himself said in an opportunity that it had taken him sixty years to write *The Razor's Edge*.³

The very title of the novel reveals the religious atmosphere it bears. According to Anthony Curtis, Maugham found this name as part of a verse in the Katha-Upanishad, one of the sacred books of Hinduism. This verse would assert: "The sharp edge of a razor is difficult to pass over; thus the wise say the path to Salvation is hard."⁴

Salvation is undoubtedly what Larry Darrel, the protagonist in the novel, is looking for. His story begins in Chicago, in 1919, when Larry, a former American aviator who had fought in the Great War, is engaged to a girl named Isabel. After his return from the war, everyone expects Larry to follow what would be considered the normal flow of his life, i.e., to settle down and soon afterwards marry Isabel. However, Larry's attitude was now very different. Owing to a traumatic experience lived in the battlefield, he suffered a radical change of his outlook and values. Contrary to the predominant conception of life of his friends and, more than that, of his own people and culture, he no longer hankers after a successful career which could provide him with material richness and comfort. His main concerns now are metaphysical. He means to dedicate to studies which can lead him to spiritual illumination.

In order to achieve this objective, it is inevitable that Larry breaks apart from his own materialistic friends, people and culture. Thus, he first goes to Paris where he starts his studies and, two years later, after a definite breaking-up with Isabel, he goes to several other places

such as Poland and Germany in order to give continuity to his search. Finally, he goes to India where he achieves the illumination he was so eagerly looking for. After that he returns to Europe where he meets Isabel again, who is by now already married and the mother of two children, and also some others of his former American friends. One of these is Sophie Macdonald who, unable to overcome the trauma of losing her husband and child in a car accident, has become a prostitute and is now leading a miserable life in the brothels of Paris. Larry helps her out of that kind of life and proposes to marry her. However, due to Isabel's obscure machinations, Sophie returns to her former life and ends up murdered by one of her lovers in Toulon. Towards the end of the novel, Larry reveals his intention of going back to his country to work in a garage or as a taxi-driver.

In direct contrast with Larry's spiritual and metaphysical concerns, the other characters are constructed as extremely materialistic people. Two of them are especially relevant in this respect. They are Isabel and her uncle Elliott Templeton. After refusing to follow Larry in his pilgrimage, Isabel decides to marry Gray Maturin who had been in love with her for many years. However, it is not love that moves her to accept his proposal, but rather the certainty that he will provide her the wealthy life she so much dreams of. Yet, many years later, when she meets Larry again after his journey to India, she finds out she still loves him the same way she used to.

As for Isabel's uncle, Elliott Templeton, he is an American expatriate who lives in Europe. Elliot has renounced with despise the values of his society in favor of the splendor of the European aristocracy. So, although not so materialistic as his countrymen, he is also deeply concerned with worldly affairs. What he most values in life is his relationship with the European aristocracy.

The construction of the main characters in *The Razor's Edge* and the development of its main theme began years earlier, in previous works of Maugham. The first of these works pointed out by Maugham scholars is a play called *The Road Uphill*, which was written in 1924, but was never produced. The other is the short story 'The Fall of Edward Barnard' that appeared in the collection of short stories named *The Trembling of a Leaf* in 1921. The setting in this story is also Chicago. Its protagonist, Edward Barnard, rejects the life his society can offer him and the marriage to a beautiful girl to lead a completely different kind of life in the South Seas. Like Larry's girl-friend, Edward's girl is also named Isabel. Bateman Hunter, the

friend who ends up marrying Isabel, is undoubtedly a previous version of Gary Maturin, Isabel's husband in *The Razor's Edge*.

The narrative technique used by Maugham in *The Razor's Edge*, narration in the first person singular, is not entirely innovative in relation to his previous works. The only greatest innovation worth mentioning in this novel is his naming of the narrator as Mr. Maugham. According to Calder this is a reflection of the development of a confidence and self-assuredness of his technique.⁵ However, in spite of his own inclusion in the story, Maugham takes no part in the direct development of the incidents. The story of the main characters is presented by a series of conversations or report of conversations in which he is always one of the interlocutors. Yet, in spite of its apparent simplicity, this procedure becomes rather complicated since the story is not presented in a chronological order and Maugham's contact with the characters occurs in different places and times with sometimes the interval of years between them.

We can see, then, that both in terms of technique and theme, *The Razor's Edge* is the result of a process of maturity of technique throughout Maugham's literary career. However, his approach of a spiritual theme is sometimes given another interpretation by some of his scholars. In this sense, Robert Calder, although in a moment takes *The Razor's Edge* as the continuation of the development of a theme which began with *Of Human Bondage*, in another moment sees it as a part of a stratagem used to adopt whatever theme is in vogue. Thus, he says:

Throughout his career his awareness of the literary fashions of any particular age was keen, and, chameleon-like, he was able to adapt to the colours of the time. When the *Bildungsroman* was at the height of its vogue in Britain, with the publication of such novels as Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* and Joyce's *A Portrait of the artist as a Young Man*, he produced *Of Human Bondage*. When the artist-outcast became a figure of romance for those disillusioned by the routine of twentieth-century life, he wrote *The Moon and Sixpence*. And when Aldous Huxley, Gerald Heard, and Christopher Isherwood began to create an interest in Indian mysticism, the seventy-year-old Maugham responded with *The Razor's Edge*. This is not to say that he lacked originality or that he gave the reading public only what it wanted. His achievement was to adapt his own themes – especially that of freedom and bondage – to the literary fashions as they changed over the years and within each framework to develop an individual and personal expression.⁶

Besides the works of Huxley, Heard, and Isherwood, another evidence of the fashion of the theme of spiritual search is the immediate and immense success of *The Razor's Edge* with the reading public. According to Richard Cordell, it brought Maugham a vast amount of mail from American and British servicemen. Most of them had had access to the paperback edition of the novel⁷. Actually, the novel's success went beyond the English language. It was translated into a dozen languages in which it was received with similar success.

Another evidence of the appropriateness of its theme to the time of its publication was the immediate interest of Hollywood in making its film version. Maugham was then invited to write the screenplay for it. However, the eventual director of the film, Edmund Goulding, ended up using an original screenplay written by Lamar Trotti.

Being written when Maugham was living in the United States, *The Razor's Edge* was first published there in April, 1944 and only three months later, in July, it was released in England.

In Maugham's country, it is once again *The Times Literary Supplement* that releases the first review on a new novel by him. Under the title "Modern Mystic," this review appeared in the edition of July 15, 1944⁷. The reviewer, who does not sign the article, introduces the novel in a very favorable way. He starts by asserting that "Mr. Maugham's new novel is extremely interesting and a pleasure to read." For him, the central theme of *The Razor's Edge* is, in a way or another, present in all of Maugham's previous works. In his words, this theme is the recurrent question "whether the meaning of existence, if there is a meaning, can be apprehended in rational terms. Or is the nature of what is called reality made known to us only through one or other variety of mystical experience?"

The critic identifies as one of the merits of Maugham's in *The Razor's Edge* the fact that he is successful in the development of this theme taking into consideration that apparently he did not own a metaphysical mind. Quite the contrary, - to use his words - Maugham took his "stand on a Gallic lucidity of thought" and an almost Gallic materialism of thought.

In discussing the argument of the novel, the critic finds that it bears some resemblance to Aldous Huxley's late years. However, he observes that Maugham's argument is less rigid and less dogmatic than that author's. Maugham's description of the people who move in a sophisticated society is also pointed out as a success. Here, he makes some comments on the construction of the main characters in *The Razor's Edge*. Beyond doubt, it is the character of

Elliot Templeton who most pleases the critic. In his view, Elliott is depicted as a kind, cultivated person, but, at the same time, as a monster of abject snobbishness, which makes him a handsomely constructed character. But he also mentions the study of minor characters like Suzanne, who develops her own style in picture by the collective influence of different painter lovers and also the character of Isabel whom he sees as a study of human depravity.

In what concerns the narrative technique applied by Maugham, the reviewer identifies an influence from Henry James in the handling of the incidents of the plot. Analyzing specifically the use of the first person narrative he, although recognizing that this narrative style may not be so good a method as that of the omniscient narrator, ends up by asserting that in Maugham's hand "[its use] certainly has its points."

After that, the reviewer dedicates a whole paragraph to tell the life story of the protagonist of the novel, Larry, which constitutes the bulk of the novel's plot. He tells the trajectory of his life in search of some kind of spiritual illumination and how the narrator, who not coincidentally is an English novelist named Mr. Maugham, comes to know the facts of his life.

In the very beginning of this plot summary of *The Razor's Edge*, the reviewer leaves an indication of his dissatisfaction with the construction of Larry's character. This is when he refers to him as "[the] hero, [the] philosopher-saint, [the] all but articulate mystic (...)" This impression is confirmed in the last paragraph of the review which is especially dedicated to an analysis of the novel's protagonist. Analyzing Larry's bouts of goodness and simplicity, the reviewer refers to Dostoevsky's character Myshkin, to define him as some kind of Anglicized or Americanized version of that Russian fictional character. The resemblance lies in the similarity between Myshkin's feelings for Nastasia Phillipovna and Larry's for Sophie. The construction of this similarity is what leads him to assert that "only an Englishman, indeed, could be as sincerely Dostoevskian at this time of day as is Mr. Maugham." In other words, the point of his criticism is the anachronism of the novel's protagonist's feelings. In face of that, for not being a tea-drinking Russian, he sees Maugham's character as lacking imaginative validity.

Concluding his analysis of *The Razor's Edge*, the reviewer says that in many ways it is a fascinating book, but as a work of art it is perhaps sentimental. As for its worldliness, it seems passionately honest whereas its other-worldliness seems unreal.

What we have, then, is that in spite of the praises to Maugham's novel in the beginning of his review, and to some of his characters, the predominant tone of *The Times* review is not positive. If we consider that the main focus of concentration of an author when writing a novel is the protagonist and the development of its main theme, we can say that in *The Times* reviewer's understanding, Maugham failed with *The Razor's Edge*. In spite of the attractiveness given to the treatment of the theme and the good development of the secondary characters, Maugham was not successful in his main enterprise which, we can say, was the description of a soul in search of spiritual illumination.

After *The Times*' review of *The Razor's Edge*, the second English one appeared in *The Manchester Guardian*, on its edition of July 21, 1944. This review, which is signed by Charles Marriott, is a rather favorable one⁹. Marriott begins by drawing attention to a passage in the very beginning of the novel that reveals the experienced novelist who wrote it. This is the passage when the narrator says: "Then [after his death] it will be quite clear of whom I write in this book, and those who want to know at least a little about his early life may find in it something to their purpose." In Marriott's interpretation, this is a device used by Maugham to catch his readers' curiosity to his novel. They will be seduced by the possibility of one day finding out who the real person is who inspired the creation of the character of Larry Darrell.

In a first moment, one may think that Marriott means that Maugham's literary greatness in *The Razor's Edge* lies only in the use of this kind of stratagem. However, this is not the case. The reviewer asserts that the book does not depend on speculations about Larry's identity because the protagonist, whom he describes as a fascinating creature, has a reality of his own and this will enable many readers to fit a name to him out of their own experience. Larry's fascinating character is outstanding in his relation to his Chicago friends. His avowed intention, revealed in the constant assertion that his plans for the future are "to loaf" in Paris, instead of making him an uninteresting character, reveals in fact the desinterestedness which characterizes his life project. This is something that eventually will vex his friends and acquaintances.

Like the reviewer of *The Times*, Marriott also sees some influence from James in *The Razor's Edge*. For him, both the cast and setting, together with the way the emotional relationships between the characters are described, are typically Jamesian. Another point in common with *The Times* review is that in his view Marriott also gives a special emphasis to the character of Elliott Templeton. First, he observes that, in the interwoven dialogues by

means of which the story of Larry is told, Elliott is the main source of information for the narrator. Regardless of this function in the narrative structure of the novel, the reviewer describes him as “one of the most gorgeous and consistent snobs in fiction.”

After dedicating more attention to the character of Elliot Templeton than to that of Larry, *The Manchester* reviewer seems to feel obliged to emphasize Larry’s central role in the story. After all, as he points out, he is the one who steals the story insofar as he is the preoccupation of all the characters, especially the women. We have to notice here that the reviewer is unconsciously suggesting that Larry’s centrality is revealed only by the novel’s plot and not by the quality or complexity of his construction. If these were the criteria adopted, he certainly would lose his central role.

But, besides being the central preoccupation of the women characters, there is still another characteristic of Larry’s that makes him steal the story. For Marriot, Larry, unlike other fictional characters who are also involved in a similar search, does not bear the pretentiousness that always spoils the attempts to describe seekers after God.

After these two favorable reviews of *The Razor’s Edge*, the next to appear does not bring only praises to Maugham’s novel. This is the review that was published in the *Spectator*, on its edition of July 21, 1944, i.e., on the same day of the publication of *The Manchester Guardian* review. *The Spectator* review is signed by Kate O’Brien who, besides being a critic, was also a playwright and novelist¹⁰.

The predominant tone of O’Brien’s criticism is irony. She begins her review telling of the pleasure *The Razor’s Edge* brings to discriminating novel-readers. The reason for that is that, according to her, Maugham had already announced he would not write another novel again and now his change of mind will be the cause of much rejoicing. No doubt, she speaks of Maugham’s novel as a landmark in his career. Qualifying him as a new Maugham, she says that this novel, which she considers solid, skilful, and accurately calculated, will give pleasure and food for reflection to many people. Besides, in terms of Maugham’s literary reputation, she says it will re-stir the critical consideration of his formidable talent. However, the way O’Brien puts her considerations seems to suggest she intends to mean something else. With those praises, she seems to suggest there is some kind of artificiality in Maugham’s techniques. In a way, this impression will be confirmed in the next paragraph when she talks about her own reaction to novels in general and to *The Razor’s Edge* in particular.

As a way of introducing her opinion on Maugham's works, O'Brien begins by speaking of her appreciation of literature in more general terms. Thus, she points out the reason why she likes or dislikes some classic names of the universal literature. For instance, she says she feels no warm enthusiasm for Balzac. On the other hand, she can return many times to any volume of Turgenev but never to Dostoevsky. As for Trollope, she says she can read him with admiration but, in her words, with tepid pleasure. Speaking of Jane Austen, she says she is not a 'Janiete', naming only *Emma* as an exception in the works of the nineteenth-century English novelist.

Pursuing this description of her own literary taste, O'Brien informs us that this discriminating taste of hers also works in relation to the contemporary writers. In spite of this, she is unable to find a correspondence among those with whom she could compare Maugham. Thus, she could explain why she is unable to appreciate with full pleasure his more mature works.

Although not saying it explicitly, O'Brien suggests that what prevents her from enjoying Maugham's works is a certain mechanical or artificial technique he has developed throughout his career. Paradoxically, she understands he has achieved a level of almost perfection in his technique. In her words, "his technique in the construction of a story is almost perfect, I suppose, and he brings all the easier graces to adorn his austere outline; precision, tact, irony, and that beautiful negative thing which in so good a writer becomes positive – *total*, but *total*, absence of pomposity; he is never solemn and he is never facetious, and these two seemingly opposed manners are great traps for the pompous. He strips everything down to the reasonable; he is always cool, always detached, and he observes relentlessly."

These considerations make obvious that O'Brien sees the "perfection" of Maugham's style as the result of an artificial process of self-improvement. Nonetheless, for those who are familiar with Maugham's non-fictional works, this is not a surprising revelation. Whether O'Brien was familiar with it or not, the truth is that Maugham himself had already, by that time, revealed this about his writing technique. It was in his book *The Summing Up*, published in 1938, so much before *The Razor's Edge* appeared, that he wrote about his attempts to improve and develop his writing technique. There is a very revealing passage in which he says in this respect:

It was not till some years later that it dawned upon me that it was a delicate art that must be painfully acquired. The discovery was forced upon me by the difficulty I found in getting my meaning down on paper. I wrote dialogue fluently, but when it came to a page of description I found myself entangled in all sorts of quandaries. I would struggle for a couple of hours over two or three sentences that I could in no way manage to straighten out. I made up my mind to teach myself how to write.¹¹

A little ahead, and still on this subject, Maugham also reveals:

Shocked by the poverty of my own vocabulary, I went to the British Museum with pencil and paper and noted down the names of curious jewels, the Byzantine hues of old enamels, the sensual feel of textiles, and made elaborate sentences to bring them in. Fortunately I could never find an opportunity to use them and they lie there yet in an old notebook ready for anyone who has a mind to write nonsense. It was generally thought then that the Authorized Version of the Bible was the greatest piece of prose that the English language has produced. I read it diligently, especially the Song of Solomon, jotting down for future use turns of phrase that struck me and making lists of unusual or beautiful words. I studied Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Dying*. In order to assimilate his style I copied down passages and then tried to write them down from memory.¹²

So, it might be based on these assertions that O'Brien criticizes Maugham's technique.

However, regardless of the originality of her considerations, the notion still remains that *The Razor's Edge* can be seen as the epitome of Maugham's efforts to perfect his literary technique. Yet, this achievement has its negative side. As O'Brien suggests, in spite of its perfection, it became mechanical. It lacks that character of innovativeness which many critics consider essential in the definition of a work as art. Besides, she seems to suggest that this achievement of perfection might also mean stagnation. This becomes extremely relevant especially when we consider the moment of experimentalism that the prose was undergoing in the first half of this century.

Perhaps even more serious than being out of tune with the literary demands of the moment, Maugham's perfect technique, as O'Brien suggests, becomes an obstacle to the full development of the theme of the novel. In her view, it ends up becoming a barrier which Maugham is unable to transcend in order to develop all the potentialities of the theme he chose. He always remains within his "beautifully finished technique."

This view of Maugham's failure in handling the theme of *The Razor's Edge* is retaken by the end of the review. After presenting a summary of the main events of the story and the final destiny of its characters, O'Brien shows how Maugham's techniques impoverish its final

effect. His main failure was to write the story from the outside. Obviously, she is referring to Maugham's refusal to dive into his characters' psychology, as in the case of Larry "never attempting to hack down to the bones of the man himself." For her, there is an "amusing *chic*" and a "curious *Champs Elysées décor*" spreading all over Larry as well as all the rest of the story and its characters. In spite of Maugham's excellent handling of this, it makes his story sterile.

After O'Brien's, the next review of *The Razor's Edge* to appear was on the pages of *The Daily Telegraph and Morning Post*, on its edition of July 28, 1944¹³. This review, which is signed by George W. Bishop, begins by defining Maugham's novel as a success story, something its author himself does towards the end of it. Bishop attempts a link between this aspect of Maugham's novel and his present stay in the United States. In his view, being this a popular kind of story in his host country, Maugham makes *The Razor's Edge* a success story to meet the demands of the American public.

However, as Bishop emphasizes, *The Razor's Edge* is not just another story of the kind "From Log Cabin to White House" which is so much appreciated by the Americans. It is Larry himself, the protagonist, who makes *The Razor's Edge* a different story, although at a first sight it seems to be just another success story. This observation leaves room for some considerations on the way Maugham manages to handle some apparent paradoxical elements in his novel. Unlike his countrymen, Larry is not concerned with a great career and accumulation of money. This, at least apparently, makes him an unAmerican hero and could make him rather unpalatable to the American public. Yet, the success of the novel in the United States shows the contrary. The truth is that, in spite of this superficial difference, Larry has still much in common with his countrymen. Although not concerned with material success, Larry, like his countrymen, is deeply motivated by a strong desire for success. This is the underlying value that he shares with his people and the only difference lies in the worlds they move. Attributing Larry this characteristic, Maugham was able to make him sympathetic to the American reader although he disapproves of their capitalistic values.

Coming back to Bishop's review of *The Razor's Edge*, after making a very short summary of the plot of the novel and the construction of its characters, he concludes by saying that it is Maugham at his best. But like other reviewers, he makes the remark that Maugham is at his best not for the construction of the protagonist of the novel, whom he

understands some will consider a spiritual dilettante, but rather for the creation of Elliot Templeton and the other cosmopolitans with whom Larry interacts throughout the story.

Only in the following month after the publication of Bishop's review in *The Daily Telegraph and Morning Post*, another article on *The Razor's Edge* would appear. This time it comes in the pages of *Punch* on its edition of August 9, 1944 and is signed by the initials H.K. From the very title of this review, "A Blunted Edge," we can easily deduce that it is not a favorable one¹⁴. The basis of H.K.'s analysis of *The Razor's Edge* is the inconsistency of Larry's trajectory to salvation. Beginning by the origin of the novel's title which, as we have already seen, is a quotation from the Katha-Upanishad, the reviewer points out its inappropriateness to name Larry's story. For him, the track along which Larry ambles towards his salvation is not a good comparison to razor's edges. In accordance with this understanding, he presents a short summary of the novel's plot mentioning the main events of Larry's life which, in his view, do not constitute a hard path.

However, if on the one hand H.K. understands that Maugham fails in the construction of Larry, on the other hand he understands that he was successful with the character of Elliot Templeton. Elliott reminds him of Alroy Kear, one of the main characters in *Cakes and Ale*. Although he thinks that Elliot is not pictured with as much relish and skill as the latter character, he understands that he is able to evoke a tenderness that Alroy does not. And this certainly makes him a more memorable character in Maugham's gallery. As a way of emphasizing the supremacy of Elliott's depiction over Larry's, H.K. says that Maugham should have deleted Larry altogether and concentrated only on Elliot. With this successful depiction of Elliott contrasted with the failure in characterizing Larry, H.K. finishes his analysis saying that Maugham "is surer a chronicler of a snob's progress than a pilgrim's."

The last review of *The Razor's Edge* that appeared in the year of its publication was on the pages of *New Statesman and Nation*, on its edition of August 26, 1944. This review, which is entitled "The Art of Being Good," is signed by Cyril Connolly who, besides Maugham's novel, also analyzes some pieces of fiction by E.M. Forster¹⁵.

As the title itself reveals, Connolly's is a very favorable review of *The Razor's Edge*. Connolly begins his review by asserting that this is Maugham's best novel since *Cakes and Ale*. Relating its theme to the literary moment of its publication, Connolly asserts that there

was a decline in literary quality that was matched by the decline in literary tastes and that's why the novel breathes the atmosphere of another world.

Connolly identifies *The Razor's Edge* within a literary line that was in vogue at that time and which he names as the literature of non-attachment. In this way, *The Razor's Edge* would rank with Aldous Huxley's *Grey Eminence* (1941) and Gerald Heard's *Man the Master* as propaganda of the new faith which is called by different names such as neo-Brahmanism, or the Vedanta of the West. This new faith, according to Connolly, has made its home in what he calls a "somewhat macabre proximity to Hollywood." One can easily associate this reference to Hollywood as an implication of the easy success sought by those dealing with this new faith. And surely he was not mistaken if we consider the interest of the Hollywood moguls in producing a film version of *The Razor's Edge* soon after its publication. But, to be true to the facts, it should be also said that Connolly's reference to Hollywood had a geographical dimension. Those writers mentioned by him who were involved with the new faith were living in the proximity of Hollywood where, before the publication of *The Razor's Edge*, Maugham stayed for a time with them.

Nonetheless, besides identifying the theme of Maugham's novel with this literary vogue, Connolly also sees it as the continuity of a theme within Maugham's own oeuvre. It is not the first time Maugham demonstrates an interest for those who turn their back on the world. As examples, Connolly mentions *The Moon and Sixpence* and *Don Fernando* and the presence of several Eastern types of holy man in his stories. Maugham's interest in this theme becomes even more relevant when one takes into consideration, according to Connolly, that he was the worldliest of the English novelists. Anyway, his fascination is not only for those who follow some mystic inclination, but for anyone who renounces the world in order to follow his personal inclination, either as a communist in *Christmas Holiday*; an artist, in *The Moon and Sixpence*; or a saint, as it is the case in *The Razor's Edge*.

To be more precise, Connolly does not see *The Razor's Edge* as exactly a study in sanctity but rather in pre-sanctity insofar as it deals with the early years of Larry's life, before he lives his spiritual illumination in India. For him, Larry is depicted as someone who could save the world, if it ever listened to him. As part of his sanctity he is depicted, in many ways, like any ordinary person. In Connolly's words, he is like "a delightful, simple, single-minded Krishnamurti from the Middle West."¹⁶

Connolly's next step is an analysis of the elements in the structure of the story which form the background for the development of the theme of Larry's sanctity. It is in this sense that he is duly presented with temptations of the world and of the flesh. The former is represented by Elliot Templeton, whom not surprisingly Connolly also considers the "most perfectly drawn of all the characters" in the novel. As for the flesh temptations, three main female characters in the novel represent these: Isabel, Sophie Macdonald, and Suzanne Rouvier.

In a first moment, one can think that Connolly is merely referring to these women working as flesh temptation for Larry in what concerns only the possible sexual aspect of their relationship. However, taking a closer look at the way he sees their function in the thematic structure of the novel, we can see that their role as tempters go much beyond this sexual possibility. In this way, Isabel is the typical American girl full of ambition who, although being charming and sensitive when first engaged to Larry moves into a different kind of person after abandoning him. She becomes, in Connolly's words, a "chic, beautiful, greedy, heartless woman, typical of all well-dressed, noisy, yet withal warm and honest, machine-tooled cosmopolitans." Sophie Macdonald, on the other hand, is the American girl who goes to the bad, i.e., drink, drugs, and sailors. Finally, Suzanne Rouvier, the honest whore, who, with her charm and common sense represents the values of French civilization in a direct opposition to those of the American society as they are represented by the worldly Elliott, the savage Isabel, and the nymphomaniac Sophie. Together these three women represent the possible ways of life Larry would lead if he deviated from his spiritual search.

By attributing to these women other functions than sexual tempters for Larry in his process of sanctity, Connolly does not line up with the interpretation of Larry's personality which would appear some years later. For some people like Anthony Curtis, John Whitehead and Robert Calder, it is undeniable the Larry has some homosexual leaning. For instance, in Curty's perspective Maugham's protagonist "seems [...] to be a compassionate homosexual, always ready to help a lame duck, listen to the troubles and salve the wounds of his friends, but never serious deflected from his own singleness of purpose. His occasional beddings with women, such as the Chaucerian episode in the hay loft of the farm near Zwingenberg, must be taken with a pinch of salt."¹⁷

In Connolly's view, those above-mentioned people constitute the material on which Larry has to work in his pre-sanctity state, a work in which, for him, Larry fails. His failure

lies in his incapacity to live with his pairs. While staying with them his main concern is only to go away and search for the truth by reading and traveling, manual labor and meditation. In Connolly's logic the right way for Larry's sanctity should be to grow spiritually in his natural environment and among the people with whom he has to interact. In other words, what he suggests is that Larry's trips abroad resembles more an escape than a spiritual search.

However, still in what concerns the theme of the novel, Connolly understands that the most difficult task presented to Maugham is to convey the mystical experience which, so far, has defied all rational analysis. This is another aspect Connolly is not entirely happy with. For him, Maugham's enterprise can be considered successful as long as he is only describing Larry's spiritual quest after his friend's death in the battlefield. Nonetheless, the problem begins when it comes to Larry's choice of a faith. Connolly is not happy with Larry's choice of a religion because he understands that truth should not be associated with a specific religion. The moment he chooses a religion, Larry is inevitably restricting his concept of truth. Associating it with a specific religion means to limit it to a certain system of belief and rituals. This raises a sense of disappointment.

Now, this criticism of Connolly takes into consideration not only Larry's character, but also Maugham's own outlook on religion which he always made public. Connolly points out that when Larry enters the religion of the neo-brahmins he is implicitly accepting a set of doctrines which, among others, involves the belief in the transmigration of souls, Braham, Vishnu and Siva. Now, Maugham's efforts to make this convincing are more disastrous than his previous and well-known criticism of Christianity. For Connolly, the demonstration of Larry's spiritual power, i.e., his hypnotic trick to cure Gray's migraine, is ridiculous. Thus, his conclusion is that it would have been better for the novel if Maugham had not confined Larry to any religious system. He should have let him have his revelation and leave it at that.

Moving from a thematic analysis of *The Razor's Edge* into a structural one, we can equally notice a change in Connolly's approach to the novel as a whole. Now, he sees it from a more favorable perspective. If the theme of the novel was treated with a certain severity, the critic reveals a certain delight in the technique applied by Maugham. Once again taking into consideration not only *The Razor's Edge*, but Maugham's complete oeuvre, he sees there is an improvement on his technique. His handling of the characters comes to perfection and also his inclusion of himself in the novel as the narrator Willie Maugham is done with complete mastery.

Connolly goes into specific details when commenting on Maugham's technical improvement. Maugham's merit in including himself in the plot of the novel is that he puts himself on the same level of his characters. He is not a mere stooge or onlooker as some kind of *deus ex machina*. He also mentions Maugham's avoiding the use of the expression "I have a notion," which, we can deduce, is very recurrent in his previous fiction. Still emphasizing this aspect of Maugham's development as a writer, Connolly suggests it is a surprise for, being the greatest living short-story writer, everyone could expect a masterful handling of plot and drawing of character, but not such a good fluency of writing.

Another aspect of the technique employed by Maugham that is pointed out by Connolly is his determination to tell the truth in a form "which releases all the possibilities of his art." In this sense, he says that "[Maugham's] comments and asides excite us in their justice and sometimes by their rancour."

As an Englishman, Connolly points out what he considers to be a regretful feature of *The Razor's Edge*. This is the fact that it was not written for the British but rather for the American public. The evidence of this intention of Maugham's, according to Connolly, is that one can identify a lot of playing down to the American common man as well as a faintly disapproving attitude to Europe and England. Besides, still within this intention of Maugham, Connolly also identifies the inadequate use of slangy expressions which are already out of date.

At the same time, Connolly recognizes that, even though the novel was primarily written for Americans, it is not an eulogy to them. Their weak points are tactfully yet remorselessly suggested. One of these weak points concerns the Americans' spirituality Maugham subtly refers to in the last paragraph of the novel:

Larry has been absorbed, as he wished, into that tumultuous conglomeration of humanity, distracted by so many conflicting interests, so lost in the world's confusion, so wishful of good, so cocksure on the outside, so diffident within, so kind, so hard, so trustful and so cagey, so mean and so generous, which is the people of the United States¹⁸.

For Connolly, with the last paragraph of the novel, Maugham seems to be saying in other words about the Americans' spiritual values: "I have a notion that the new Messiah is going to have his work cut out."

Connolly ends his considerations on *The Razor's Edge* commenting on the unfavorable reviews it has received. The negative reception *The Razor's Edge* received from reviewers makes him pose the question: "Are we becoming incapable of recognizing excellence when we see it?" The only reason he can find for that is prejudice. It is a prejudice against the novel for recapturing the graces that have vanished and also against the attitude assumed by Maugham with it, that is, of not being "content with the banal routine of self-esteem and habit, graced by occasional orgies of nationalism and herd-celebration," which, in his view, is what moves the majority of people's life.

Considering all of those above reviews of *The Razor's Edge*, we can see that there are two points which predominate in them: the excellence of Maugham's literary technique and his success in the construction of the character of Elliott Templeton.

There is no doubt that Maugham's almost perfect technique in *The Razor's Edge* is the result of a long process of discipline and study. As we could see, this was revealed by Maugham himself in his book *The Summing Up*. In this sense, we do not exaggerate when we say that *The Razor's Edge* is the epitome of his study in literary techniques. His merit with this achievement is even greater when we consider that when this novel was published Maugham was already seventy, an age when most writers would have for long passed their acme of excellence.

There is also no doubt that the creation of a character like Elliott Templeton is part of this achievement. As we could see, for most of the reviewers of *The Razor's Edge*, Elliott is the most elaborate and best constructed character, the one in the novel who has all the possibilities of becoming memorable in the gallery of Maugham's creation. The best epitome of the reviewers' delight in Elliott Templeton is the assertion of H.K., the *Punch* reviewer, that Maugham "is surer a chronicler of a snob's progress than a pilgrim's."

However, at the same time, so much praise to the character of Elliott can also be seen as a failure of Maugham. This happens when we consider that all this praise is done to the detriment of Larry, the protagonist in the story. Needless to say that any writer when working on a novel has as his main objective and focus of attention the main character of the story and not the secondary ones. If he happens to be more successful with a secondary character, this can only mean he did not achieve what he originally meant with his protagonist. Even worse than that, we can speculate if the writer's success with the secondary character was just a

chance. Unhappily, this is what might have happened in *The Razor's Edge*. In this case, the *Punch* reviewer's above-mentioned assertion becomes even more laden with truth.

There is still another aspect which makes Maugham's successful creation of Elliot Templeton more revealing of a failure of his in the construction of *The Razor's Edge* as a whole. Considering the polarities theme/technique, we can assert with almost certainty that Maugham's main concern in this novel was the theme. As we could see, according to Curtis, *The Razor's Edge* was the result of lifetime observations on themes such as religion, good, evil, and God. The negative reaction to the novel's theme shows that Maugham, in spite of achieving an almost perfect technique, was not able to transmit adequately the result of so much reflection. On the other hand, we also have to admit that he might not have meant to put so much philosophy and religion in his novel. After all, as we could see in the epigraph that opens the previous chapter, Maugham was entirely against the discussion of any philosophy or set of ideas in a fiction work.

Now, Maugham's failures in the creation of Larry and in the development of the novel's theme acquire an entirely different interpretation when seen from the perspective of the aesthetics of reception. In what concerns the novel's theme, the reviewers do not mention, or better to say, they could not see at that moment, that it reveals Maugham's great sensitivity to catch his readers' expectations. This sensitivity is revealed when we consider the time *The Razor's Edge* was published, i.e., the days of World War II. Obviously, that was a time of disillusion with human institutions. In crisis periods like that, many look for refuge in religion. In such a context, a novel whose main theme was mysticism would certainly fulfill the expectations of many readers.

The expectations of the readers also provide a different view of the novel's protagonist. Larry's creation is no longer seen as a failure when we consider the horizon of expectations of its creation. The great success of *The Razor's Edge* with the American public makes him one of Maugham's best-depicted characters. In order to understand this we have to consider that Maugham was not an American and had never lived in the United States for a time long enough to become familiar with the peculiarities of the American character. Maugham's merit becomes even greater when we consider that, as we have seen, Larry has some rather unAmerican characteristics in spite of which the novel was a success with the American readers.

As we have said above, the other aspect of *The Razor's Edge* that equally pleased the reviewers was its narrative technique. Needless to say that not all reviewers share this enthusiasm for the narrative technique of *The Razor's Edge*. There is obviously some disagreement. However, in their appreciation of this aspect of Maugham's novel, reviewers show an attitude that, in fact, permeates the whole critical reception of *The Razor's Edge*. We can notice that Maugham's artistry is treated with a certain respect and admiration but, at the same time, with some reservation as well. Thus, at the same time that they emphasize the almost perfection and the pleasantness of Maugham's technique, they keep suggesting it does not mean literary greatness.

Another evidence of the reviewers' uncertainty when assessing Maugham's artistry is their resorting to a comparison with other writers. At least two reviewers mention a similarity to Henry James in his creation of characters. *The Times Literary Supplement* reviewer resorts to Dostoevsky in his analysis of Larry. Besides, we should not forget Kate O'Brien who makes reference to innumerable authors before beginning her appreciation of Maugham's novel. We can notice that these comparisons are not just an attempt to place Maugham within a literary context, but rather a justification for not attributing him literary greatness.

A possible explanation to this attitude of uncertainty of the reviewers can be found in Maugham's own oeuvre. In his description of the trajectory of Edward Drifffield, one of the main characters in *Cakes and Ale*, into the status of the Grand Old Man of English Letters, the narrator insists that he was helped much by his old age. According to him, no other people respect and admire longevity more than the English. By the time Maugham published *The Razor's Edge* he was already seventy. Besides his age, he had already published a large number of successful books in different genres, what could not be easily ignored by the reviewers.

2. *Trying to work the last miracle*

After the publication of *The Razor's Edge*, Maugham still wrote a novel called *Then and Now* (1946) before he published *Catalina*¹⁹ in 1948. When he wrote *Catalina*, Maugham did it with the intention of making it his last novel. Writing to a friend soon after its publication, he declared: "I had a lot of fun writing it and all the time I was doing so I enjoyed besides the reflection that it was the last novel I ever should write."²⁰

Although in this personal letter he refers to *Catalina* as a novel, at other moments he prefers to call it a romance. In fact, in its first edition by William Heinemann Ltd., *Catalina* is termed "A Romance by W. Somerset Maugham." Obviously, the word romance is used here in its traditional literary sense as defined by Hugh Holman: "works with extravagant characters, or remote and exotic places, or highly exciting and heroic events, or passionate love, or mysterious or supernatural experiences."²¹ No doubt, the apparitions of the Virgin Mary, the working of miracles, the presence of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, and the references to Saint Teresa de Avila in a same story that takes place in sixteenth-century Spain are enough elements to classify *Catalina* as a romance.

Regardless of its genre classification, the truth remains that Maugham kept his promise when he said *Catalina* would be the last piece of fiction he would write. Actually, after it he continued to write, but only essays and retrospective pieces. According to Robert Calder, ten years after its publication, Maugham claimed not to have had an idea for a story in a decade.²²

In the elaboration of *Catalina* Maugham used material that he had originally assembled for a picaresque novel, a project he never carried out. This material was collected in his trips to Spain to whose people and culture he had a long devotion. In setting his last novel in Spain, Maugham certainly meant a homage to the country where he first knew the delights of his chosen profession. It was there that he wrote his first pieces of fiction after leaving medical school.

Besides its setting, there are still other elements in *Catalina* that reveal Maugham's intention of collecting there some past elements of his writing career. Like in *Liza of Lambeth*, his first novel, the protagonist of *Catalina* is a girl who lends her name to the novel. In the same way that the protagonist of *Of Human Bondage*, Philip Carey, is tormented by a clubbed foot, *Catalina* has also a crippled leg. Towards the end of the story, she becomes an actress, the same profession of the protagonist of *Theater*, Maugham's novel published in 1937. *Catalina's* main theme, the making of a saint, also echoes some previous works of Maugham's such as *The Razor's Edge*.

The story of *Catalina* takes place in seventeenth century Spain, in a small town called Castel Rodriguez. It begins when its protagonist, a girl named Catalina, sees the apparition of the Virgin Mary who tells her she can be cured of her physical deficiency by the

son of Don Juan Suarez de Valero who has best served God. The truth is that Don Juan has three sons. The first one is the Bishop of Segovia, Friar Blasco de Valero who is known all over Spain as a saint. Besides, he is also known for his rigidity of moral and religious values and also for his severity in judgments carried out by the Holy Office, better known as the Inquisition. One of his brothers is Don Manuel de Valero, a captain of renown in the king's armies. The other brother, Martin, is the only one who now helps his old parents to keep soul and body together, although he has become a shame for the family for his decision to become a baker.

It seems that following the logic of the fairy-tales, it is inevitable that modern readers will immediately conclude that Martin is the one meant by the Virgin Mary to cure Catalina. However, this is not the way she and her contemporaries think. They obviously understand that Friar Blasco is the only one who can work the miracle mentioned in the apparition. This leads them all to an embarrassing situation when both Friar Blasco and Don Manuel are not successful in their attempt. When it comes to Martin's turn to try it, although he had to be forced to do it, he is obviously successful. Nonetheless, the merit of the miracle is attributed to his religious brother who helps him to carry out the ritual in which the miracle is worked.

After this event the story follows a completely different course. Doña Beatriz, the prioress of the convent where Catalina's mother works and who had personally persuaded Don Blasco to work the miracle, tries to make Catalina a nun in her convent. At first, one might think that her main concern is Catalina's salvation. Yet, her ulterior intention is to rival with the other religious order founded by Teresa de Avila. In Doña Beatriz's mind, it is inevitable that Catalina will be canonized sometime in the future after her death. With this canonization, her religious order will have the same prestige of that of the other order.

However, Catalina, with an unintentional demonstration of exacerbated sexuality, convinces the prioress of permitting her to elope with Diego, her former boyfriend who, now that she is cured of her crippling, is back to her. Together, Catalina and Diego run away to another city where, again with the help of the Virgin Mary, they marry and Diego is finally allowed to have sex with his wife.

Following its somehow erratic course, the plot of *Catalina* is unexpectedly invaded by the apparition of two characters who, although not named by the narrator, are easily recognized as Don Quixote and his faithful friend Sancho Panza. With this artifice, Maugham

again pays homage to the country he so much loved. It is with the help of these two characters that Catalina and Diego meet a troupe of players who are in need of a new actress. Catalina is induced to try a performance and replace the missing actress. This incident gives a completely different turn to her life and leads her to her final destiny. By the end of the story, Catalina has not become a mere actress but, in fact, the most famous actress in Spain besides being the mother of six children.

In the year of its publication, *Catalina* received eight reviews in the newspapers of England. In general, those reviews were not very sympathetic. It seems that Maugham's last novel, published when he was already 74, did not help in any way to enhance his literary reputation.

The first review of *Catalina* appeared in the pages of *The Manchester Guardian* on its edition of August 20, 1948. Paul Bloomfield, whose first assertion about *Catalina* reveals that for him it is the kind of novel that nobody would attribute to an English novelist, signs this article²³. In his words "*Catalina* might have been written under a Mediterranean sun by a Frenchman, a sceptical deist, a reluctantly renegade Catholic, a member of the Academy."

Bloomfield is not referring to any technique or style used in the novel, but rather to its setting and theme. His suggestion is that it is really new to have an English novelist dealing with sunny landscapes like those of Spain and people who are directly or indirectly involved with the Catholic Holy Inquisition. These are the elements in *Catalina* that make Maugham rather "unEnglish" in Bloomfield's eyes.

Actually, Maugham's fascination with Spain's Golden Century and with many other aspects of it, including the religiousness of its people, is no surprise for those who are more familiar with Maugham's works. In the same way that many other authors had a special love for a specific city or country like, for instance, Forster's love and fascination with India, Maugham was always fond of Spain and its culture and history.

But although it is not clear whether Bloomfield was familiar with this trait of Maugham's personality, he certainly could feel the great familiarity and ease with which Maugham deals with the novel's "unEnglish" theme. He reminds his readers that once Maugham asserted that for him writing a play was "as easy as falling off a log." Now, Bloomfield supposes that it was with a similar disposition that he wrote *Catalina*.

In what we may consider as a brief summary of the novel, Bloomfield characterizes it as fun novel, not forgetting to mention the appearance in its pages of historical and illustrious personages like Teresa de Avila and Don Quixote. As for Maugham's style in *Catalina*, he defines it as perfect all the way through. However, the same is not true of its narrative structure. There is one incident towards the end of the novel that, in his view, makes its structure go a little to pieces. This is the second intervention of the Virgin Mary in Catalina's life. To be more precise, it is when she prevents Diego from having sex with her protégée before getting married.

It is also towards the end of the novel that Blomfield detects a faster tempo in its narrative structure, which he does not point out as necessarily a fault. Actually, speaking of Maugham's readers' feeling by the end of their reading of *Catalina*, Bloomfield understands that they will have a sense of regret for knowing that the story does not run a second volume. In other words, he means that with *Catalina* Maugham once again is successful in catching and holding his readers' attention and interest up to the end of his novel.

In spite of all these praises, obviously Bloomfield does not see *Catalina* is meant to be a classic. This viewpoint is revealed in the very last sentence of his review. In his words, *Catalina* is "a trifle, to be sure, but brilliantly clever and amusing."

In the same day of the publication of the review in *The Manchester Guardian*, another appeared in the pages of *The Spectator* and was signed by L.A.G. Strong²⁴. In his article, Strong analyzes three other novels along with *Catalina*, namely, Georges Bernanos' *Joy*, Joanna Cannan's *Little I Understood*, and Robert Standish's *Elephant Walk*.

Strong begins his analysis of *Catalina* by saying that in it Maugham's main concern is miracles rather than saintliness. With this assertion, Strong is not comparing *Catalina* to any other previous work of Maugham, as one can be easily led to think, but rather making a connection between his analysis of it and that of Bernanos' novel. However, this does not prevent us from applying his assertion to Maugham's oeuvre itself. In his study of religiousness and other topics alike, *Catalina* seems to be a continuation of *The Razor's Edge*, especially when we consider that former novel as a study of sanctity or pre-sanctity, as Cannolly prefers to call it.

Strong proceeds with his analysis by making a summary of the main events of the story. It is a summary in which he does not show much concern for the precision of the terms

he uses and the pieces of information he gives. For instance, he begins his summary by saying that Catalina has a vision of the Madonna when in fact it is not exactly the Madonna she sees but only the Virgin Mary without baby Jesus. When he mentions Catalina's uncle, Domingo, Strong suggests that Maugham's readers may feel they have met him before. Unhappily, he does not say where else in Maugham's oeuvre he appears.

After this presentation of the short summary of the novel, Strong poses the question: "how does it fare by Mr. Comfort's standards?" It is impossible to know what exactly he means by Mr. Comfort's standards. Yet, he does not seem to be referring to a specific person. In this case, Mr. Comfort would be just a device he uses to pass a judgment on the novel under analysis. Besides, the use of the words *comfort* and *standard* would suggest an attempt to evaluate the novel in accordance with the predominant standards at its time of publication.

In any case, an evaluation of *Catalina's* literary merits is what Strong does in the next paragraph of his review. Significantly, in this evaluation he starts by referring to Maugham as the author of *Ashenden* and *First Person Singular*. These are collections of short stories that were published in 1928 and 1931 respectively. It is not by chance that Strong chooses two books of short stories to refer to Maugham. By the time of the publication of *Catalina* Maugham had already gained a reputation as great writer of short stories to the detriment of his prose writing. Actually, some go as far as to consider him the English Guy de Maupassant.

But this reference to Maugham's short stories has another reason. It gives Strong the opportunity to comment on the narrative technique used by him in *Catalina* by comparing it with its use in short stories. For *The Spectator* reviewer, the main characteristics of this technique is a portrayal of characters basically by showing what they do and say. Consequently, the main advantage of this technique is that it allows the report of conduct without a necessary understanding of its motives. By pointing out those characteristics of Maugham's narrative technique after mentioning his two short story books, Strong means to show the appropriateness of its use in that literary genre. However, it becomes inadequate when applied to a larger work like a novel. That's what he shows when proceeding with his analysis of *Catalina*.

Thus, Strong's next step is to make comments on the use of this technique in Maugham's last novel and its consequences. He notices that in recent years Maugham had

developed an interest in other aspects of character and experience which were not common in his previous novels. This new interest of his involves the mystic, the visionary, the poetic. For the treatment of these themes, Strong understands that the method above-mentioned is not appropriate. This inappropriateness consists in that those themes demand more than just accurate observation of behavior and attitudes. Although he does not say it, we can deduce that for an adequate treatment of those themes it is necessary to dive into the psychology of the characters in order to show the whole depth and intensity of their conflicting experience. In other words, Maugham applied the wrong method for the development of his characters in *Catalina*.

Strong, then, asserts that in this novel Maugham has followed his inclinations. Although he does not go beyond this assertion, we can deduce he is suggesting that Maugham is extremely ironical and also humorous in this novel as he was in his previous works. This is what suggests his exemplification with the appearance of Don Quixote in the novel. Considering him a powerful symbol in Maugham's mind, Strong says that its presence emphasizes that this story is really meant to be a fairy-tale.

Nonetheless, in spite of its fairy-tale resemblance, some of the values dealt with in *Catalina* appear uneasy. Strong is referring to a questioning of Catholicism and some of its secular religious values. In this sense, he says that Maugham sees Blasco naked whereas some of the other characters he sees in pants and brassière. The truth is that Friar Blasco, whose behavior and acts make him a despicable man in our modern eyes, is depicted with sympathy by the narrator. By the end of the story, in spite of his severity with the heretic and the much suffering he imposes on them, the reader is led to share his personal suffering and doubts with sympathy. At the same time, in relation to other characters, Maugham has a very different attitude. It seems that he only means to be funny when describing their interior life. In this sense, the most obvious example is Doña Beatriz who is not treated with the same amount of sympathy as Friar Blasco although she also has her own frustrations and sufferings. Even the narrator's references to Teresa de Avila only mean to make fun out of the behavior and views of Doña Beatriz. It is, thus, by bestowing entirely opposite treatments to his characters that Maugham manages to hide among funny scenes and situations a serious questioning of traditional values.

So, it is in face of this apparent indefiniteness of purpose of Maugham that Strong ends his review of *Catalina* saying that he will forget about it and will keep admiring and respecting the author of *Ashenden* and *The Casuarina Tree*.

A reference to Maugham's previous works is also made in *The Times Literary Supplement* review of *Catalina* which, contrary to the other times, is not now the first on a novel by Maugham²⁵. But, like the previous ones, this review of *Catalina* also comes unsigned although, in his book, Ted Morgan identifies its author as being Anthony Powell.²⁶

Powell's review of *Catalina* is entitled "Stirring the Mixture." The meaning of such a title can only be fully understood when we know that it means to continue a play between Maugham and *The Times* reviewers. It began in 1936 with the publication of a book of short stories by Maugham entitled *Cosmopolitans* which was reviewed in *The Times* under the title "The Mixture as Before." Playing with this review, Maugham borrowed its title to name his next collection of short stories published in 1940.

Now, the continuation of this "game" by Anthony Powell means more than just an entertainment with words. Taking the opportunity of reviewing Maugham's last novel, he tries to provide a panoramic review of his body of work. In this sense, the title of his review also makes it obvious that for Powell there is not any trace in *Catalina* that makes it especially different from anything published by Maugham before.

In spite of this, the review begins with very favorable remarks about Maugham's literary career. After asserting that Maugham has some claim to be considered the most representative of living English writers, Powell says it is not possible to give an account of the novels, short stories and plays produced in the last fifty years without paying respect to his invention and industry. To this, the reviewer adds, quoting Maugham himself, that in his trajectory he has also experimented with the *belles lettres*. If we understand that by *belles lettres* he is referring only to literary works of good quality, the reviewer is insinuating, or rather taking for granted, that most of Maugham's production stands out of this qualification. Speaking of the popularity of Maugham's books, Powell risks to assert that the highbrows who do not like Maugham's works are on the whole those not ranking foremost in their own hierarchy. This view of Powell's concerning those critics who do not appreciate Maugham implies an obvious explanation for their attitude. Insofar as they are not in the foremost position in their own profession, they refuse to demonstrate any sympathy for a writer who

has gained a great popularity because, in their understanding, this could turn out to be ruinous to their own career.

Reminding his readers that Maugham is also a dramatist, Powell uses this remark to develop an analysis of Maugham's narrative technique which will resemble much that analysis of L.A.G. Strong in *The Spectator*. For him, when a playwright and dramatist are in a same body they are always at war. A war in which apparently the playwright always wins. Powell's opinion is that although dramatic technique can be very useful in the construction of a short story, in the construction of a novel it is necessary to have it under a precise control otherwise its effect will be disastrous to it. One of the most obvious negative effects of dramatic technique in a novel is that its author tends to manipulate his characters in such a way that they make good entries and exits but fail to do their duty to the fiction they are in. In this sense, Maugham, according to Powell, cannot escape criticism. Needless to say that for him this constitutes the greatest problem in the narrative structure of *Catalina*. In fact, more than theatrical dramaticity, the reviewer sees *Catalina* as suggesting cinema.

This is not the only fault that Powell finds in the narrative structure of *Catalina*. In another moment of his review, he asserts that it is not difficult to identify a pattern to it up to the episode of Catalina's healing. This pattern would be the old story of the meek and humble putting down the might from their seat. However, it is difficult to make something out of whatever comes after this episode since, in his words, the story becomes "a trifle shapeless."

If Powell is not satisfied with the development of the story, the construction of the characters is not a cause of satisfaction for him either. To express his dissatisfaction with the way some characters are handled, he tells of his frustration for not knowing more about Martin, the son of Don Juan de Valero, who could work the miracle that cured Catalina. This miracle, we should remember, is the central event in the novels' plot. In an ironical tone, Powell says that all we know of Martin is that he was "a tidy soul." He compares this assertion with another on Ashenden when the narrator says he is "a neat creature." Still in the same paragraph and still with an obvious tone of irony he compares the assertion that "Catalina was not unused to the direct language of her day" to another on Lord George in *The Happy Hypocrite* which says he would "clad in Georgian costume, which was not then, of course, fancy dress, as it is now." In fact, more than just trying to express his dissatisfaction with the lack of profundity of the characters, Powell tries to show with these above excerpts

from *Catalina* and other works by Maugham how inadequate was his use of dramatic technique in the construction of his characters in the novel under analysis.

For Powell, there is something besides Maugham's dramatic background which *Catalina* reveals about its author. It is what he calls the essential materialism of Maugham's literary point of view. In the reviewer's analysis, one of the episodes in the novel which best reveals this materialism is the fact that Diego, forbidden to marry Catalina when she becomes crippled, will have to marry an ugly girl. Had he married this ugly girl, he could never make up for the loss of a beautiful one. Ultimately, what this materialism implies is a plain logic which is quite questionable.

The episode of the dialogue between the prioress and Catalina is another event that reinforces this logic of Maugham's materialism. During that intercourse, Doña Beatriz's change of mind about Catalina getting married is solely provoked by a strong awareness of the other's sexuality. Facts like this, according to the reviewer, lead to the "assumption that marriage is entirely a matter of passion, and that passion is almost entirely a matter of good looks." And he still adds that both postulates rest decidedly on questionable premises. Besides, its greatest failure is that it leaves out or at least makes almost unnoticed the complicated gradations of interest and instinctive attraction that influence human relationship.

Powell understands that there is a danger in pushing this kind of materialism beyond a certain point. This danger consists in the fact that the balance of the narrative structure will have to be redressed by a strong dose of sentimentality. Although this is common in more popular kinds of literature such as novelette or film, he accepts that sometimes the same law also operates in higher levels of writing. So, it is natural that this is something Maugham cannot escape. More than that, the reviewer admits that in Maugham's case this approach is sometimes apt enough. Here, he mentions one of his previous novels, *The Painted Veil*, published in 1925. This is an example of a novel in which this formula seems to have fit perfectly.

Powell proceeds with a demonstration of passages in Maugham's "more solid works" – to use his words – in which this materialism and its corollary effects appear. The first of these works is *Of Human Bondage*. The example he quotes from this novel is its final scene. Due to the harsh coloring of passion and worldly success which are inappropriate to the circumstances of the story, Maugham creates the character of Sally as a romantic peasant with

a whimsical father. In his next "solid work," *The Moon and Sixpence*, the narrator expresses this same materialism when comparing, towards the end of the novel, the two sons of Charles Strickland. In his comparison of the two men, the narrator asserts that "no half-tones are allowed. A man must give up the world entirely or become utterly extinguished by its onerous demands."

Actually, the point Powell is trying to make is that this scheme works perfectly in short stories where a more elaborate and longer handling of characters is not necessary. The best evidence of this is Maugham's high reputation as a short-story writer with successful pieces like the Ashenden stories, "Rain," "The Outstation," and "The Alien Corn."

Powell concludes his panoramic review of Maugham's body of work by tracing some comments on *Cakes and Ale* whose reception we have already analyzed in a previous chapter of this work. It is not our objective here to move into his considerations on that novel. It suffices to say that it is for considering it Maugham's best novel that he chooses it to conclude his article. In his view, none of the other novels that followed it reached the same level of realistic satire.

Contrary to this broad and ambitious evaluation of *Catalina* within Maugham's body of work, the *Punch* review is rather objective and much more concise. Under the title "It Happened in Spain," it appeared in the edition of August 25 and is signed by Francis Bickley²⁷.

Bickley begins his article by comparing Maugham's life style with the variety of settings in his works. In an allusion to the many trips abroad that Maugham took during his life and their reflection on his production, Bickley says that for a seasoned traveler like him a journey from twentieth-century Malaya to sixteenth-century Spain is just a holiday excursion.

It is still using this same metaphor of excursion that Bickley moves into an analysis of *Catalina*'s merits. For him, it is like a holiday excursion that one is inclined to classify its story. Actually, in his view *Catalina* was written only for fun, which obviously disqualifies it as a good piece of literary work. But even considering *Catalina* as just a novel meant to be funny, Bickley points out a defect in it which is not common to this kind of novel. It takes longer that it seems necessary to get it well going.

Bickley contests Maugham's definition of *Catalina* as a romance. For him, its irony makes it more adequate to be classified as a *conte philosophique*. On the other hand, he recognizes that its irony is rather intermittent. An example of this intermittence is the treatment bestowed on Doña Beatriz and Friar Blasco. While the former is definitely treated with scathing irony, especially in her desire to make Catalina rival with nobody less than Saint Teresa de Avila, her counterpart, Friar Blasco, is granted a more generous treatment by the narrator.

Like the above reviewers we have already seen, Bickley also comments on the abrupt change in the narrative structure towards the end of *Catalina*. For him, it is from the moment when Catalina and Diego are on the open road that the narrative gets closer to the realm of the picaresque novel. However, Bickley understands that this change is not a deliberate movement of Maugham, but rather the result of his uncertainty of intention. Nonetheless, this abrupt change in its narrative does not prevent *Catalina* from being an entertaining novel. In spite of it, it still remains a source of enjoyment for Maugham's readers.

A radical different perspective from that of *Catalina* as a fun novel is adopted by George D. Painter in his review that appeared in *The Listener*, on its edition of September 2²⁸.

Taking into consideration that *Catalina* is a historical novel, Painter begins his comments on it by telling of an event in the life of Somerset Maugham when he was in the very beginning of his literary career. After the publication of his first novel, *Liza of Lambeth*, he set out to write a historical novel. He was moved to do so by the influence of a saying of Andrew Lang for whom the historical novel was a good training for the inexperienced writer. The result of Maugham's enterprise was a novel called *The Making of a Saint* which is considered one of his minor novels, a failure of sales and criticism. The lesson it left for Maugham was the opposite of that advocated by Lang. In *The Summing Up*, the book where he makes a general evaluation of his life, we can find what Maugham thought of the value of writing a historical novel when one is still an immature writer.

The historical novel calls surely for a profound experience of men: to create living people out of those persons who with their different manners and different notions at first sight seem so alien to us, and to recreate the past needs not only a vast knowledge but an effort of the imagination that is hardly to be expected in the young. [...] The novelist should turn to the historical novel towards the end of his career when thought and the vicissitudes of his own life have brought him knowledge of the world, and when, having for years explored the personalities of people around him, he

has acquired an intuition into human nature that will enable him to understand and so to recreate the figures of a past age.²⁹

It is this assertion that makes Painter conclude that Maugham wrote *The Making of a Saint* at least fifty years early. Besides, it is also what leads him to define *Catalina* as the historical novel which Maugham had set his mind on writing towards the end of his writing career.

It is still connecting it with *The Making of a Saint* that Painter will proceed with this analysis of *Catalina*. First concentrating on it as a historical novel, Painter will give continuity to his review of it, starting from an analysis of the possible reason for the failure of *The Making of a Saint*. Painter understands that to Maugham the essential quality of a hero is self-knowledge without which virtue and courage become vice. This view is in fact just a reflection of Maugham himself whether it is present in Philip Carey or in Ashenden, as a secret agent, or still as the narrator in *Cakes and Ale*. Being these characteristics a mere reflection of his own, it is obviously impossible to transfer himself, a modern man, to an earlier century. So, Painter's suggestion is that the cause of the failure of *The Making of a Saint* was this anachronism of imposing Maugham's characteristics on its historical characters.

However, this problem could be avoided in *Catalina* because here the protagonist is not a man, but a woman. Thus, those above-mentioned qualities inevitably assume different connotations. In this case, self-knowledge can be replaced by instinct. On the other hand, virtue and courage become less exemplary but more amusing and instructive. In this way, Painter concludes saying that "*Catalina* is *The Making of a Saint* upside down and inside out, sunned with a lifetime of mellowing experience and vastly improved."

After presenting a short summary of the main events of the novel's plot, Painter moves into an analysis of Maugham's qualities as a writer. To begin with, he says that Maugham is the only living English writer who knows how to tell a story. Even more than that, he says that most of the lesser fry, that is, the lesser English writers of his time, who show signs of also having this ability, owe it to a study of Maugham. Nonetheless, in Maugham's specific case, Painter does not see this ability to tell a story as a great literary merit, but rather as a barren virtue. In this sense, he compares the majority of Maugham's works with a bag of sweets which contain liquorice as their base. And he explains the analogy: "It is impossible not to finish [a novel by Maugham] at a sitting, and impossible not to feel afterwards that one has been eating sawdust." In other words, what Painter says is that Maugham uses his ability

to tell a story to draw the attention of his readers who can not resist reading his novels at a single sitting. Nonetheless, by the end of the reading one finds out that his novels have no substantial content at all. Thus, Maugham's ability to tell a story becomes just a surface attraction which disguises the lack of content of his novels.

Needless to say that with such considerations Painter means a severe and negative criticism on Maugham's style of writing fiction. However, one wonders if Maugham would ever get offended with such criticism at all. In more than one opportunity he expressed his concept on the writer's and on literature's objective. For instance, in *Ten Novels and Their Authors*, he asserts that "the aim of the writer of fiction is not to instruct, but to please."³⁰ As for the purpose of fiction itself, he says in another moment of the same book: "I cannot repeat too often that a novel is not to be read for instruction or edification, but for intelligent enjoyment, and if you find you cannot get this from it you had far better not read it at all."³¹

So, we can easily deduce from these quotations that for Maugham the quality of a literary work should be gauged by the enjoyment it provides to the reader. Furthermore, it would not be wrong to say that when he set out to write a novel like *Catalina*, his main intention was precisely what critics like Painter would reject, that is, to tell above all an entertaining story.

After this accusation of superficiality in *Catalina*, Painter concedes it a praising comment. He says that it surprises with the reappearance of the distinction of mind which pervades *The Summing Up*, Maugham's book of recollections. For Painter, this is a rare characteristic in Maugham's average novel.

Certainly this "distinction of mind" exerts some influence on the style used in *Catalina*. For Painter, Maugham's novel suffers from his characteristic underpunctuation. By underpunctuation he means the precise use that Maugham makes of punctuation in his novel in terms of meaning. In this sense, Painter understands that to Maugham a semi-colon is a sign of semi-consciousness, and a comma is nearly coma. The pursue of such kind of style is for Painter an influence from the eighteenth-century.

Painter concludes his analysis of *Catalina* making positive comments on Maugham's choice of the theme of the novel. He begins by saying that its theme will be a disappointment only for those admirers of his who expect him to go on writing about the same novel indefinitely. This would mean to deal again and again in an obsessive way with the

Philistinism of the English upper middle class. Besides, *Catalina*'s theme also reveals an escape from the pattern of novelists who austere believe in art for style's sake. This pattern would be the mistake of taking a personal foible for a universal symbol and vice-versa. For Painter, what helped Maugham to overcome this pattern was his exile in the United States during World War II. It was then that he could realize the utter unimportance of the rich moron with whom he spent a whole generation. Furthermore, Painter also mentions his association with the Hollywood mystics. This association suggested to him the theme which Painter understands every important writer should tackle at least once, i.e., the justification of God's ways to man. And that's what he does in *Catalina* which Painter defines as Maugham's most sympathetic and uncharacteristic novel since *Of Human Bondage*.

After Painter's appreciation of Maugham's last novel as a historical one, the next review that appears in a way retakes the definition, given by Bickley in *Punch*, of *Catalina* as just a fun novel. This review is signed by Simon Harcourt-Smith and was published in *The New Statesman and Nation* on its edition of September 11.³²

Besides *Catalina*, Harcourt-Smith also analyzes three other novels, namely, Thornton Wilder's *The Ides of March*, Charles Jackson's *The Fall of Valours*, and Chan-Chun Yeh's *They Fly South*. He begins his analysis of these four novels by comparing them to mirrors which reflect different things. Wilder's novel reflects the marvelous; Jackson's, the "abnormal," Yeh's the larger than life; and Maugham's obviously reflects the miraculous. By the unfavorable review Harcourt-Smith makes of *Catalina*, we can deduce that in his view this reflection it produces is not a good one.

In the same way that in *The Listener* Painter analyzed *Catalina* based on *The Making of the Saint*, Harcourt-Smith also refers to a previous work of Maugham's. This time it is *Then and Now*, the novel that in a chronological order immediately precedes *Catalina* and which he appreciated more than it. This dissatisfaction with *Catalina* is expressed in the very first sentence of his review, when he says "a distinguished mind playing with the past, clothing it in its own conceits is one thing. A distinguished craftsman putting on fancy dress is quite another." The implicit criticism in this statement is similar to the one Francis Bickley had already suggested in his review of *Catalina* in *Punch*. It is merely a novel for fun and entertainment. This is what the image of a "craftsman putting on fancy dress" suggests.

It is still in association with this image of the craftsman on fancy dress that Harcourt-Smith comments on *Catalina*'s style which in fact is the chief focus of his review. In this aspect, he accuses Maugham of having lost his Edwardian functional characteristic and thus overlaying *Catalina*'s faltering design with incrustations which are atypical to his style.

But still referring to the initial analogy of the mirror, Harcourt-Smith reassures that *Catalina* works as a mirror reflecting a miracle, but it does so with a vengeance, that is, with exaggeration. To exemplify it, he himself exaggerates, perhaps without noticing it. Mentioning the apparitions of the Virgin Mary in the story, he counts eight of them when in fact there are only two. Yet, regardless of their number, Harcourt-Smith sees these interventions not as following the logical magic of a good fairy-tale, but rather as merely the device of a tired script-writer.

This reference to Maugham by using a term related to the cinema is not aimless. Due to the several works of his already adapted to the cinema by the time of publication of his last novel, Harcourt-Smith is suggesting that Maugham wrote *Catalina* with an eye on Hollywood. So, when creating the characters of his story, Maugham was in fact creating characters to be performed by cinema actors. It is in this sense that Harcourt-Smith says that "every one of the lay-figures in *Catalina* might have been borrowed from the prop-department of M.G.M. or Universal." And he still adds: "No doubt we shall see them back there again one day."

Harcourt-Smith finishes his review lamenting Maugham's incapacity to produce good works as he used to. According to him, there is something "infinitely saddening" in Maugham who is no longer giving his readers the same pleasure as before. Referring to one of his best appreciated works, he says it is time to read *The Moon and Sixpence* again.

It is also a feeling that with *Catalina* Maugham could not repeat the same excellence of some of his previous works what the next review expresses. This, which was the last review on *Catalina* in 1948, was written by Nora Hault and appeared in the section "New Novels" of the October edition of *Books of the Month* where Maugham's novel is analyzed together with five others.³³

In a way, with her first sentence on *Catalina*, Hault summarizes her entire opinion of it. In a somehow ambiguous way she asserts that "it is not often that that master of caustic entertainment, Mr. Somerset Maugham, gets lost: when he does it is because he moves away

from his own sphere which is definitely of the world, worldly." It is clear that she sees Maugham as just a master of entertainment who has a caustic style. Besides, in this same assertion she also expresses her view that *Catalina* is a failure and the reason for it, i.e., Maugham's moving away from his own sphere, "the world, worldly." In fact, this is not the first time Maugham is characterized as a predominantly worldly person. We should remember here Cyril Connolly who, in his review of *The Razor's Edge*, asserts that Maugham was the worldliest of the English novelists.

However, if one takes Hoult's assertion from a strict literary point of view, its broader implication becomes clearer. As V.S. Pritchett asserts in his review of *The Razor's Edge*, people who have dedicated their life to some spiritual search or cause have always attracted the eye of Maugham and naturally their presence abound in his fiction. Examples of this can be found even from his early short stories, such as "Faith," in his non-fiction works like *Point of View* and *The Gentleman in the Parlour*; and also in his prose fiction like the above-mentioned *The Razor's Edge*. Thus, when Hoult says that Maugham gets lost whenever he moves into unworldly matters, she indirectly involves many other works of his. Her thematic evaluation of *Catalina* becomes rather far-reaching involving many of Maugham's previous works.

If on the one hand Hoult seems too severe in her evaluation of Maugham's treatment of unworldly themes, on the other hand, she shares the same opinion of other reviewers in what concerns *Catalina*'s narrative structure. She sees the novel in two distinct moments. In the first moment, the apparitions of the Virgin Mary lead to an expectation of the old fairy tale formula. Nonetheless, after *Catalina*'s miraculous cure, everything is rushed back into solid earth which, in her opinion, is the result of Maugham's uneasiness about a prolonged intercourse with an orthodox mind.

In the second moment of the novel, there is a predominant tone of sentimental farce in the modern manner. Thus, following this unexpected change in the story, we have Catalina addressing Diego as "My sweet" and the austere Prioress Doña Beatriz moved by the "sex in its awful nakedness" which she sees on Catalina's face.

Obviously, in Hoult's view Maugham does not manage to put the two disparate ends of the novel together and make a coherent whole out of it. For her, the story ends in a

haymaking romp which outstands in its lack of taste. In this sense, not even the resort to ornamental devices like the figure of Don Quixote saves the novel's end.

As we can see, most of the reviews *Catalina* received were rather unfavorable. In a broad sense, we can say that there are two great faults in Maugham's last novel which were pointed out by almost all the reviewers who tackled with it and that, in a way, determined their final evaluation of it. The first of these concerns the novel's theme. Underlying the comments of all those reviews there seems to be the same idea expressed by Norah Hoult, in *Books of the Month*, although not always with the same severity, that Maugham always gets lost when he moves away from his natural sphere into unworldly matters. But unlike Hoult, who is so general in her criticism of *Catalina*'s theme, we have other critics who are more specific in this regard. As instances of this we have both L.A.G. Strong, in *Spectator*, and Anthony Powell, in *The Times*, who, in their respective reviews, analyze the inadequacy of the dramatic technique used by Maugham to his chosen theme.

The second major fault in *Catalina* concerns its narrative structure. There is an almost unanimity in identifying two different moments in the story which Maugham does not succeed in making a single and coherent whole. But while some reviewers, like Powell, limit themselves to just point out this problem in the narrative structure, others, like Francis Bickley, in *Punch*, and Hoult, either assert explicitly or suggest it to be the result of Maugham's inability to deal with the novel's theme.

Now, seen from the perspective of the aesthetics of reception, the faults mentioned above acquire a different interpretation. To begin with, the theme is far from being a failure because Maugham did not mean to present a serious treatment of religion. His aim was to entertain his readers with a good story. That's why the reviewers who approach it as a fun novel are not so dissatisfied with it. Obviously, he did not mean to approach religion with the seriousness he had used in *The Razor's Edge*. It was no longer a time of war and certainly people's view of religion had somehow changed.

As for the narrative structure, it could also be justified from the perspective of a fun novel. But, more than that, it is also an evidence of Maugham's awareness of his readers' expectations. The forties were a time when the cinema was becoming a very popular art. The audiences all over the world were getting more and more used to its language. So, if the narrative structure of *Catalina* is rather cinema-like, as at least two reviewers assert, it is not

by chance. It means that Maugham was trying to meet his readers' expectations. It is a pity that *Catalina* was his last novel, otherwise we might have seen the development of this new technique of his.

There is still another fact that evinces Maugham's deliberate narrative structure in *Catalina*. As we saw in the reception of *Catalina* and *The Razor's Edge*, in what concerns the catching of the readers' attention and interest, reviewers were almost unanimous in recognizing the perfection of their narrative structure. So, it is obvious that in the case of *Catalina* he is trying to conform to his reading public's expectations. The evidence that he was going in the right direction is the fact that, although asserting that it has many failures, the reviewers are sure Maugham's readers will appreciate *Catalina* as much as they had appreciated his former works.

Still within this perspective of the cinema resemblance that *Catalina* bears, we can also mention another of its characteristics pointed out by the reviewers. It is Maugham's capacity to transport his readers to places and situations completely different from their reality. His readers had this expectation because of the popularity of the cinema that could bring to them images from places and times very exotic. But also because of Maugham's previous works, especially the short stories whose plot would take place in different parts of the world.

Now, putting aside these different interpretations that some aspects of *Catalina* would receive if the aesthetics of reception were applied, the fact remains that its critical reception shares some similarities with that of *The Razor's Edge*. Beginning with their theme which revolves around religion and/or religiousness, we can see that, in general, reviewers were not satisfied with the way it is developed in both novels. In the case of *The Razor's Edge*, Larry definitely does not convince anyone of his religiousness. Maugham does not manage to give him the same consistency he gives to the character of Elliot Templeton. In general, reviewers complain about the lack of profundity in the development of the theme. In *Catalina*, the main complaint is about the development of the novel's plot. Its initial theme gets lost somewhere before its conclusion, moving into an entirely different plot which, to some extent, has nothing to do with the theme of the first part of the novel.

As for their narrative structure, in spite of their undeniable attention-catching quality, it did not please the reviewers for different reasons. In *The Razor's Edge*, for being the result

of long-trained exercises, its almost perfect technique prevents Maugham from achieving a real literary greatness. In *Catalina*, the narrative structure is broken into two distinct parts whose ends never meet. Their respective flaws, however, do not prevent those novels' plot from being considered rather interesting. In this aspect they equally reinforce Maugham's reputation as an excellent storyteller.

To conclude, it is interesting to mention the *unEnglishness* that some reviewers identified in these novels. *The Daily Telegraph and Morning Post* reviewer and Cyril Connolly, in *New Statesman and Nation* see *The Razor's Edge* as a novel written primarily for the American public. It is so not only because of its American characters but also because of the typical American "success story" which Larry ultimately lives. It is Paul Bloomfield who, in his review of *Catalina* in *The Manchester Guardian*, points out its lack of Englishness. Like in *The Razor's Edge*, the characters here are not English but Spanish people. Besides, its story takes place in a historical moment very distant and different from that lived by Maugham. Obviously, this cannot be taken as lack of love for his country and its people and culture but rather as the result of his cosmopolitanism.

NOTES:

¹ W. Somerset Maugham, *The Razor's Edge*, 1944 (London: Mandarin Paperbacks, 1997)

² Richard Cordell, *Somerset Maugham - A Biographical and Critical Study* (London: Heinemann, 1961) 131.

³ Actually, this is an anecdote on his respect told by Garson Kanin in *Remembering Mr Maugham* which is reproduced by Robert Calder in his book (*W. Somerset Maugham and The Quest for Freedom*. London: Heinemann, 1972) 231:

At that party in the Plaza in 1949, a silly fat woman we all know pressed close to him, spilled some of her Bloody Mary on to his lapel, and blew smoke into his face as she gushed, "Do you know what my favorite is? The one about Isherwood. Christopher Isherwood. What's it called? Wait a second. Don't tell me. *Razor* something. *A Razor Edge*! What a book. How long did it take you to write it?"

W.S.M., unperturbed, replies, "Sixty years."

⁴ Anthony Curtis, *The Pattern of Maugham* (London: The Quality Book Club, 1975) 222.

⁵ Robert Calder, *Willie - The Life of W. Somerset Maugham* (London: Heinemann, 1989) 297.

⁶ Calder, *Willie - The Life of W. Somerset Maugham*, 47-8.

⁷ Cordell 38.

⁸ "Modern Mystic." Rev. of *The Razor's Edge*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *The Times Literary Supplement*, 15 July 1944: 341.

⁹ Charles Marriot, "New Novels." Rev. of *The Razor's Edge*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *The Manchester Guardian*, 21 July 1944: 3.

¹⁰ Kate O'Brien. Rev. of *The Razor's Edge*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *The Spectator*, 21 July 1944, CLXXIII: 64, 66. In *W. Somerset Maugham – The Critical Heritage*, (ed.) Anthony Curtis and John Whitehead (London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987) 356-357.

¹¹ W. Somerset Maugham Maugham, *The Summing Up*, (1938, New York: The New American Library, 1956) 18.

¹² Maugham, 19.

¹³ George W. Bishop, "Books of the Day – New Fiction." Rev. of *The Razor's Edge*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *The Daily Telegraph and Morning Post*, 28 July 1944: 3.

¹⁴ H.K., "A Blunted Edge." Rev. of *The Razor's Edge*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *Punch*, 09 Aug. 1944, CCVII: 126.

¹⁵ Cyril Connolly, "The Art of Being Good." Rev. of *The Razor's Edge*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *New Statesman and Nation*, 26 Aug. 1944, m.s., XXVIII: 140. In *The Condemned Playground – Essays: 1917-1944* (London: Routledge, 1945) 250-259.

¹⁶ Krishnamurti (1895-1986) was born in the south of India and educated in England. Although he had no commitment to any religious or philosophical organization, he spent most of his life giving lectures in India, Europe, and North America. Some define him as a philosopher whereas others prefer to see him as a mystic. However, in his lectures, more than once Krishnamurti defined himself as just a religious man.

¹⁷ Curtis, 226.

¹⁸ W. Somerset Maugham, *The Razor's Edge* 304.

¹⁹ W. Somerset Maugham, *Catalina* (London: Heinemann, 1948)

- ²⁰ Ted Morgan, *Somerset Maugham* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1980) 519.
- ²¹ Hugh C. Holman, *A Handbook to Literature* (Indianapolis: ITT Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing Company, Inc., 1980) 387.
- ²² Robert Calder, *Willie - The Life of W. Somerset Maugham* (London: Heinemann, 1989) 312.
- ²³ Paul Bloomfield. Rev. of *Catalina*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *The Manchester Guardian*, 20 August, 1948: 3. In *W. Somerset Maugham – The Critical Heritage* (ed.) Curtis and Whitehead 374-375.
- ²⁴ L.Q.G. Strong, "Books of the Day: Fiction." Rev. of *Catalina*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *The Spectator*, 20 Aug. 1948, CLXXXI: 250.
- ²⁵ Morgan, 519.
- ²⁶ Anthony Powell, "Stirring the Mixture." Rev. of *Catalina*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *The Times Literary Supplement*, 21 Aug. 1948: 470.
- ²⁷ Francis Bickley, "It Happened in Spain." Rev. of *Catalina*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *Punch*, 25 Aug. 1948, CCXV: 178.
- ²⁸ George D. Painter, "New Novels." Rev. of *Catalina*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *The Listener*, 02 Sep. 1948, XL, 1023: 352.
- ²⁹ W. Somerset Maugham, *The Summing Up* 104.
- ³⁰ W. Somerset Maugham, *Ten Novels and Their Authors* (London: Heinemann Ltd., 1954) 8.
- ³¹ W. Somerset Maugham, *Ten Novels and Their Authors* 201.
- ³² Simon Harcourt-Smith, "New Novels." Rev. of *Catalina*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *The New Statesman and Nation*, 11 Sep. 1948, m.s., XXXVI: 244.
- ³³ Norah Houlst, "New Novels." Rev. of *Catalina*, by W. Somerset Maugham. *Books of the Month*, Oct. 1948, XVIII: 11-12.

CONCLUSION

I have never had much patience with the
writers who claim from the reader an effort
to understand their meaning.

(Somerset Maugham)

This above epigraph is one of Maugham's assertions that works nicely as a summary of his views on literature in general and on the kind of literature he produced in particular. Few other writers who have been clearer in their intention when writing. Maugham always wrote having in mind to please his reading public. It is obvious, then, that an evaluation of his works from the perspective of his audience would be fairer and certainly would lead to very different conclusions from those of the first reviewers of his novels.

This is exactly our objective now, i.e., to make some general comments on all those reviews of Maugham's works we have analyzed in the three previous chapters based on Jauss's aesthetics of reception. Together with that, we will try to indicate the different evaluation that certain traces of Maugham's works would receive in an audience-oriented approach. By doing this, we will be defining how Jauss's theory can be used to explain the status of a writer like Maugham.

As we have seen, the reviews we have analyzed in this work are based on the dominant aesthetic values of the horizon of expectations of the time Maugham's novels were published. Many of those values correspond to the modernist demands with which, as we have seen, Maugham never agreed. They would run directly counter to his conception of literature and its function in relation to the readers.

To begin with, one of the main characteristics of the horizon of expectations of Maugham's works was a demand for a psychological description of fictional characters. Of course, this would imply the application of academic theories in the construction of fictional works, as did many contemporaries of Maugham. A good example of this is the strong influence of Sigmund Freud's works on the modernist literature. A more specific example, although not in English literature, is Marcel Proust's use of Henri Bergson's ideas about time

in his masterpiece *À La Recherche du Temps Perdu*. However, as we could see in the epigraph of Chapter IV, Maugham never accepted the application of any theory, whatever its nature, in fiction. He always preferred the depiction of his characters from the perspective of an outside observer. Obviously, this method would be more in accordance with his reader-oriented creation process. It would not demand from his reading public any necessary familiarity with modernist theories whether philosophical or psychological.

Another very strong characteristic of the horizon of expectations in which Maugham's works appear is the demand for experimentalism in form. Again, that was another modernist demand that ran counter to his conception of literature. The quotation from his book of short stories that we saw in Chapter III works as a good summary of his view in this respect. In fact, this view is still expressed in some other texts of his. For instance, in the final considerations of *Ten Novels and Their Authors* (1954), a book where he lists and analyzes those he considers the ten great novels of all times, he says:

The novels I have dealt with in these pages are very different from one another, but one thing they have in common: they tell good stories, and their authors have told them in a very straightforward way. They have narrated events and delved into motives without recourse to any of the tiresome literary tricks, such as the stream of thought, the throw-back, which make so many modern novels tedious.¹

This quotation reveals that if Maugham never lined up with the modernists, he did it not because he was unable to produce that kind of literature, but rather out of a personal conviction. In writing his fiction he always kept his viewpoint that literature should be written primarily for the readers. If there is someone to be pleased in his interaction with the literary text, it has to be the reader.

Holding viewpoints like those above would mean to Maugham an almost despise from the critics and the intelligentsia. Besides, analyzing his attitude from the perspective of the aesthetics of reception, one would naturally say that, in refusing to adopt what was innovative at his time, Maugham's works were naturally doomed to be classified as "culinary art," i.e., that kind of work meant to fulfill entirely the expectations of its readers. After all, as we have seen, in Jauss's theory the innovative character of a work has a great power in determining its future status.

However, contrary to what at first it seems to indicate, this principle of Jauss throws some light in the confused definition of Maugham's ambiguous status within English literature. As we saw, his works could not be considered innovative if we consider the

aesthetic horizon of expectations in which they appeared. But this does not mean they were not innovative at all. Actually, the reviews we analyzed in the previous chapters show that they were indeed innovative, but in different ways and aspects from those expected by most critics and reviewers.

All those reviews reveal that Maugham was really innovative in his works, especially in two ways. First of all, there is no doubt that one aspect in which he was innovative in his fiction was the kind of realism he developed. This can be noticed especially in the critical reception of *Liza of Lambeth*, *Of Human Bondage* and *The Moon and Sixpence*. But, as we saw, most of the reviewers were not pleased with the kind of realism he developed in his novels. Actually, some considered it even disgusting. Nonetheless, in spite of this disapproval of the reviewers, these novels were a success with the reading public, which evinces Maugham's ability to develop a new kind of realism in a way he knew would please the English audience. He managed to be innovative without losing contact with his reading public.

A similar process occurred in the other aspect in which he was also innovative: the approach to the moral values of the Edwardian English society in which his works were produced. The reviews we have analyzed reveal that his approach to this theme was very different from what was conventional in fiction. Maugham's gallery of amoral characters, which involves creations like Liza, Charles Strickland, and Rosie, among others, was meant to put the English reader face to face with his own moral values. With their morally unconventional behavior, these characters did not please the reviewers entirely, but, based on the success of the novels, we can see that with them Maugham managed to shock his readers without scandalizing them. Again, he was innovating without running the risk of losing contact with his reading public.

In face of these obvious innovative aspects in Maugham's works, we have to return to the question of his status in English literature. As we saw, his works fulfil the requirement of Jauss's theory in what concerns their innovative aspect. The problem, as we have seen, is that he did not practice the kind of innovation that was favored by the academia of his time, a fact that had a determining role in the formation of his literary status. Besides, as Anthony Powell suggests in his review of *Catalina*, the reviewers who dealt with Maugham's works were, in their majority, those not ranking foremost in their own hierarchy. The major critics of his time certainly dedicated their attention to those writers who were developing the kinds of

innovation most valued by them. Their apparent indifference to Maugham's works was certainly a factor of great importance in their final evaluation.

The fact, then, is that it would not be wrong to say that Maugham was a "victim of the circumstances." He was overshadowed by the greatness of some of his contemporaries, who, with their masterpieces, determined what should be considered important in literature at that time. To make things worse, Maugham was also unlucky in what concerns the critics who reviewed his books. If we take into consideration their status in their own profession, as was suggested by Powell, it is natural that they would not be willing to demonstrate any sympathy for a writer who was not among those favored by the major critics and who had gained a great popularity during his own lifetime. In their understanding, any demonstration of great sympathy towards Maugham's works could turn out to be ruinous to their own career.

Naturally, all this reception of the reviewers was based on the characteristics of the horizon of expectations in which Maugham's works appeared. This horizon, we should say again, was predominantly modernist. However, the initial reception of Maugham's works also reveals another kind of horizon of expectations that had a great importance in the definition of his status. This is what we elsewhere have defined as Maugham's own horizon of expectations. Certainly, as consequence of the extent and diversity of his production, together with the long time he spent writing, each new work Maugham published was received on the background of the elements of his horizon of expectations. Some of these elements we have seen in the analysis of the reviewers of his works: popularity, cynicism, misogyny, lack of psychological representation of his characters. Throughout the years reviewers developed a kind of static expectation in relation to Maugham's works. Each new work he published was expected to bear these same elements as if he could no longer be original in relation to his previous production.

This peculiarity of the reception of Maugham's works together with the peculiarity of his innovation partly explains why he never achieved the status of a major writer. But the fact remains that if he never was taken as a major writer, he has never been definitely put aside as just a mere potboiler. A specific concept in Jauss's theory can help us to understand this situation. This is his concept of "culinary art." As we have seen, for the German theorist this is the kind of art that "can be characterized by an aesthetics of reception as not demanding any horizontal change, but rather as precisely fulfilling the expectations prescribed by a ruling standard of taste, in that it satisfies the desire for the reproduction of the familiarly beautiful;

confirms familiar sentiments; sanctions wishful notions; makes unusual experiences enjoyable as 'sensations,' or even raises moral problems, but only to 'solve' them in an edifying manner as predecided questions."² In other words, we can say that the so-called "culinary art" is meant to be easily consumed by the specific public of a specific age whose expectations the writer is familiar with. In the case of a literary work, after being "consumed" by the first generation of readers, a "culinary" book is doomed to oblivion.

However, this has not been the fate of most of Maugham's works. In spite of their apparently opportunistic popular appeal, some of them have never fallen into oblivion since their publication. Throughout the years they never stopped being published. Actually, one can find editions of some of Maugham's novels as recent as 1997. But more important than that, they have never become outdated. This is a characteristic of Maugham's works that was already recognized by the critic Paul David in 1954. In an article entitled "Maugham and the Two Myths," he writes,

I can only describe it as a sensitivity to current mythology as it is in the process of formation, an intuitive feeling for the drifts and fashions in contemporary impulse and aspiration as they take place. It is this which makes him in spite of the consciousness of age which he does not conceal, and the worn Edwardian quality of his style, so surprisingly up to date.³

This up-to-dateness of Maugham's novels, together with the constancy of the readers' interest throughout the years, forces us to reconsider the classification of his works as potboilers. The long-lasting life of Maugham's works reveal that they do have literary merits that, owing to the demands of Modernism, were overlooked by their reviewers. It is the presence of such merits that has allowed them to keep their readability throughout the years. Besides, we should consider that this readability is not only in their original language but also in the many foreign languages to which they were translated. Of equal importance is the fact that they have kept their readability in whatever media to which they were adapted, either cinema, opera, TV, etc. and to many different generations of readers.

All these considerations of Maugham's critical reception based on Jauss's theory bring us back to our initial question about its validity to explain Maugham's ambiguous position. There is no doubt that the aesthetics of reception can be used to explain the status of a writer in the literature of his country, even when it is a rather ambiguous one like Maugham's. As we have seen, the application of some of its principles to the analysis of Maugham's critical reception revealed some peculiarities of this reception that, beyond doubt,

gave a great contribution to the formation of Maugham's reputation in contemporary English literature.

Nonetheless, it should be remembered that the survey and analysis of those elements, as we have done in this work, constitute just a small part within Jauss's project for a new literary history. A fairer and more complete assessment of Maugham's literary importance from the perspective of the aesthetics of reception, which could clarify even more, or perhaps even destroy, the ambiguous position he holds should include much more. It should also deal with all the kinds of works he produced, including the non-fictional ones. Besides, as it was pointed out in the theoretical chapter of this work, other ways of reception should also be included. We have to remember that Maugham had many of his works adapted to other media. In his book, Ted Morgan mentions at least nineteen stories by him that were adapted to either the cinema or TV. Some of them, like *The Razor's Edge*, had more than one film version.⁴ *The Moon and Sixpence* and the short story *Rain* were adapted into the drama form. There is an opera based on *Liza of Lambeth*. The inclusion of all those adaptations becomes fundamental to grasp the real importance of Maugham's work.

Besides adaptations, there are still other perceptible ways of reception which should also be taken into consideration. We can cite, as examples, the number of editions a book had, the number of copies that were sold, the translations to other languages, and the influence on other writers.

In what respects this last item, it should be said that Maugham's influence on other writers is widely recognized but scarcely studied. In his article "Maugham's Half & Half," the American writer and critic Gore Vidal confesses, "It is very difficult for a writer of my generation, if he is honest, to pretend indifference to the work of Somerset Maugham. He was always so entirely *there*. By seventeen I had read all of Shakespeare; all of Maugham."⁵ Confirming this influence of Maugham's on other writers, the critic Troy James Basset asserts that "Maugham was a writers' writer, and writers such as George Orwell, Evelyn Waugh, Noël Coward, and Graham Greene have all expressed their debt to Maugham."⁶

Unhappily, the gratitude and acknowledgement of these writers never helped improve Maugham's position in the academic and critical circles. If we accept all of his own literary conceptions, we have to believe that Maugham's position within English literature will remain the same indefinitely. As we could see in the epigraph that opens Chapter II, he

never believed in the possibility of an author's recognition years after his death. He understands that when posterity concerns itself with authors from the past, it always chooses those that were successful in their own day.

However, as we could see still in Chapter II, Jauss's theory foresees that a work, and by the same token also a writer, that had been neglected or misunderstood by a first generation of readers could have its actual artistic value grasped by future generations. In Maugham's case, it is obvious he was not ignored by the ordinary readers of his time. It was the English literary elite who overlooked his production. But, there are some indications that a change has been taking place in the way Maugham is treated in the academic circles. It is a change that is taking place outside England but which, especially for the fact of coming from the United States, might eventually influence Maugham's status in English Literature.

The greatest portent of this change in the critical reception of Maugham's works is the first Maugham conference held at an American institution, Baylor University, in January, 1996. Referring to the realization of this conference and analyzing Maugham's present status within contemporary literary studies, Basset says that for the first time in the academic circles one is not obliged to justify his interest in the study of Maugham's works⁷. This is evidence that a first step has been taken towards overcoming the academic prejudice against Maugham.

It is not our objective here to raise the elements of the contemporary horizon of expectations that are helping to change Maugham's status in the academic circles. But undoubtedly two contemporary areas of study have given an important contribution in this sense: they are gender studies and post-colonialism. In the first case, it has to do with Maugham's known homosexuality. Although very far from becoming a gay icon for the homosexual community as Oscar Wilde, Maugham's way of living his sexuality at a time of so much discrimination against homosexuals has risen the interest of those involved in queer studies. Although during his life Maugham never became anything similar to what is nowadays known as a champion of "gay rights," in his own conciliatory way, he challenged the prejudices of his time and society. For more than twenty years he kept a stable and amorous relationship with the American Gerald Haxton. After Haxton's death in 1944, during their stay in the United States, Maugham spent the rest of his life in the company of another lover, Alan Searle. In what concerns specifically his literary production, it is inevitable that, in spite of his attempts to the contrary, his homosexual condition is reflected, in a way or another, in his works. In his already mentioned article, Vidal refers to *The Narrow Corner*,

Maugham's novel published in 1932, as one of the books where in their youth he and Tennessee Williams had identified the covert treatment of same-sexuality⁸. Being an unintentional and, to some extent, unconscious approach, the way it is done and its influence on Maugham's oeuvre is what remains to be studied by a queer approach.

As for the interest of post-colonial studies, Maugham's work gains relevance mainly from the facts that during his whole life he always traveled much abroad and that many of his trips were to the former colonies of the British Empire. Certainly, Maugham's view of those colonized people and their relationship with the English dominator is a vast field to be explored by those interested in post-colonial studies. This theme can be abundantly explored in several of his fictional or non-fictional books. For instance, there is *The Trembling of a Leaf*, a book of short stories whose setting is the Federated Malay States and the South Seas and also *The Casuarina Tree*, another short-story book published in 1926, which, in Curtis' words, provides a "realistic and ruthless penetration of the English people who lived in the Malay Peninsula and in Borneo."⁹ Besides, there is also the novel *The Narrow Corner*, published in 1932, whose story is set in Kanda, an island which is a fictional name for Banda-Neira, one of the little islands of the Dutch East Indies. Finally, among Maugham's non-fictional works, we can mention his travel-book *The Gentleman in the Parlour* (1930) in which he relates his travel from Rangoon in Burma, across the Shan States to Siam, and thence through French Indo-China to Haiphong.

For all that could be concluded from the analysis of the critical reception of these six novels of Maugham we dealt with in this work as well as for the perspective of the studies of Maugham's production in the next years, we can say that his real importance and value in the literature of his country is still to be properly apprehended. Owing to the specific context in which they were living, Maugham's contemporary reviewers missed much of the real merits of his production. But precisely for having such merits, his works were never forgotten. Throughout the years, they have kept the public's interest whether they are in their original genre or in any other form of adaptation. Now, the present revival of interest in his production is another evidence of their merits. As Jauss's theory predicts, a literary work with merit might be ignored by its first generation of readers, but its values will be recognized sooner or later by future generations. The present situation reveals that although Maugham still stands in an ambiguous position in relation to the recognition of the literary values of his works, more than ever he seems to be getting further and further away from the classification of "culinary art," although it might be audacious to say he is getting into a major writer status.

But certainly it is not audacious to say he is no longer seen as just a mere potboiler in the contemporary literature of his country.

NOTES:

¹ W. Somerset Maugham, *Ten Novels and Their Authors*, (London: Heinemann Ltd., 1954) 303.

² Hans-Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, Trans. by Timoty Bahti with an Introduction by Paul de Man, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 25.

³ Paul David, "Maugham and the Two Myths," *W. Somerset Maugham & The Quest for Freedom*, Robert Lorin Calder. (London: Heinemann, 1972) 36.

⁴ Ted Morgan, *Somerset Maugham* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1980)

⁵ Gore Vidal, "Maugham's Half & Half," *A View from the Diners Club - Essays 1987-1991*, (London: Andre Deutsch, 1991) 82.

⁶ Troy James Basset, "W. Somerset Maugham: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism, 1969-1997," *English Literature in Transition 1880-1920*, Volume 41:2 (1998): 136.

⁷ Basset 134.

⁸ Vida 92.

⁹ Anthony Curtis, *The Pattern of Maugham* (London: The Quality Book Club, 1975) 164.

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as well as in London, the reviews printed in New York newspapers and periodicals are—from the standpoint of the history of the critical response to his work—as important as those printed in London. Accordingly, commencing with the first production of *The Land of Promise* (1913; 1914) and the first publication of *Of Human Bondage* (1915), we have balanced our selection of British criticism with a selection of the American reviews. It is hoped that the double focus thus achieved will lend an added interest to this compilation.

In the table of contents the dates placed in brackets against the titles are those of first publication in the case of books or first production in the case of plays. Two dates against any item indicate publication or production in both London and New York.

PART I

BOOKS

(1897–1909)

LIZA OF LAMBETH

London, September 1897

Maugham's first book was published when he was twenty-three during his last year as a medical student at St Thomas's Hospital. Shortly after qualifying as a doctor he gave up medicine in order to become a full-time writer. His last, and seventy-eighth, book was published sixty-six years later.

I. Edward Garnett, reader's report on 'A Lambeth Idyll' for T. Fisher Unwin

January 1897

Edward Garnett (1868–1937), one of the earliest professional publisher's readers and editors, discerned in Maugham a talent for fiction while he was still a medical student. Garnett's recommendation that 'A Lambeth Idyll' (as *Liza of Lambeth* was originally called) be published launched Maugham on his career as a novelist. Garnett recognised at once the young writer's model in the low-life tales of Arthur Morrison (1863–1945) and predicted what the general reaction would be to his coarse and distressing subject matter. (For additional reports by Garnett on Maugham's juvenilia see *Edward Garnett: A Life in Literature* by George Jefferson (London, 1982).)

A Lambeth Idyll may be compared to *The Jago* by Arthur Morrison. *Jago* was a very clever study of the semi-criminal class, done, more or less, from life—not always artistic, but going deep in places. Mr Morrison's book has been rather well received by the intelligent section of the public. It, probably, has to be forced on the public & on the booksellers, & we understand that *Tales of Mean Streets* sold 1200 copies in response to a 300*£* advertisement—but still Messrs Methuen know well that their own payment comes in reputation.

Mr Maugham has not produced so powerful a study as *The Jago*—but when all is said & done *A Lambeth Idyll* is a very clever realistic study of factory girl & coster life. The women, their roughness, intemperance, fits of violence, kindheartedness, slang—all are done truthfully. Liza & her mother Mrs Kemp are drawn with no little humour and insight. The story is a dismal one in its ending, but the temper and tone of the book is wholesome & by no means morbid. The work is objective, & both the atmosphere & the environment of the mean district are unexaggerated. The question for Fisher Unwin to decide is this—the Arthur Morrison public, a slowly growing one, will understand & appreciate the book—though of course it was through Mr Henley's backing that *Mean Streets* & *The Jago* found publisher & public, & Mr Maugham has not got Mr Henley at his back. If Fisher Unwin does not publish *A Lambeth Idyll* somebody else certainly will. Of course half the critics will call the book 'brutal'. Now it is no good trying half measures—we mean there is a definite public for & against the 'study in realism'. We should say Publish—but, of course, nobody can guarantee a very favourable reception. All we can [say] is that [the] book is a clever, a humorous, study of rather low life, & that its tone is quite wholesome & the reverse of morbid. Mr Maugham has insight & humour, & will probably be heard of again.

We suggest, if the book is taken, that one chapter—that which describes the Outing at Chingford—is too long, & has too much the effect of a piece of clever reporting. The physical details concerning the dinner & its digestion by A & B are too much insisted on. In other places some of the bad words might be softened down or Henleyized a bit—a la *Mean Streets*.

N.B. The conversation is remarkably well done.

2. Unsigned review, *Academy*

LII, 11 September 1897, 65-6

Garnett's forecast proved accurate. Maugham had succeeded, perhaps more than he intended, in shocking the anonymous Victorian reviewers who first noticed his work. The following *Academy* review is typical of others.

The successes of one season may be known by the imitations of the next, and Mr Arthur Morrison may afford to smile at the sincere flatteries of *Liza of Lambeth*. The mimicry, indeed, is deliberate and unashamed. The brutal fight between two women, the talk of plumes around a death-bed, are faithfully reproduced. Unfortunately the qualities which touch Mr Morrison's work with something akin to genius are precisely the qualities which are here omitted; the directness, the restraint, the dominance of artistic purpose. What should have been a tragedy becomes a sordid story of vulgar seduction. The realism, pursued for its own sake, sinks into incurable nastiness. I have seldom read anything more unpleasant than a chapter in which Mr Maugham borrows the old pastoral convention in order to give piquancy to his description of a Chingford bank holiday. Let me detach a jewel from this carcanet:

'You 'ave fust pop,' amorously remarked the lovely Phyllis, and he took a long drink and handed the pot to her.

She, with maiden modesty, turned it so as to have a different part to drink from; but he remarked as he saw her:

'You are bloomin' particular.'

Then, unwilling to grieve him, she turned it back again and applied her ruby lips to the place where his had been.

'Now we shan't be long!' she remarked, as she handed him back the pot.

The faithful swain took out of his pocket a short clay pipe, blew through it, filled it, and began to smoke, while Phyllis sighed at the thought of the cool liquid gliding down her throat, and with the pleasing recollection gently stroked her stomach. Then Corydon spat, and immediately his love said—

'I can spit further than thet.'

'I bet yer yer can't.'

She tried, and did. He collected himself and spat again, further than before. She followed him, and in this idyllic contest they remained till the tooting horn warned them to take their places.

It is a great pity, for Mr Maugham is by no means without talent. He knows his slums, not probably as they are, but as they seem to the casual observer, and he can describe vigorously and effectively. Moreover, his principal subject, the factory girl in the clutches of a 'magerful man,' is quite capable of serious and artistic treatment. But I am afraid that Mr Maugham is less preoccupied with serious art than with the desire to out-Herod Herod in realistic audacity. And therefore I quit him with no heightened sense of the tragic pity and awe that belong to the faithful record of human life in the meanest dwelling, but with a grimy feeling, as if I had had a mud-bath in all the filth of a London street.

3. Jane H. Findlater, 'The Slum Movement in Fiction', *National Review*

XXXV, May 1900, 447-54

Jane Helen Findlater (d. 1946), Scottish novelist and critic, a daughter of the Manse, joint-author of *A Daughter of Strife* (1897), *The Ladder to the Stars* (1906) and other fiction, saw Maugham's work as part of the recently identified slum movement in fiction. She deplored both the nature of his material and his detachment from it.

The following is an extract from a longer essay.

... *Liza of Lambeth* saw the light in 1897. It is a story of brutal frankness and sickening import, and has, alas, too surely set a fashion for this sort of thing. We are spared nothing: the reek of the streets; the effluvia of unwashed humanity; but worse than all these

outside things is the hopeless moral atmosphere in which the characters move. There are no wandering lights here, the moral darkness is unpierced by so much as a ray of brightness. Not does the author seem to write in any spirit of pity, or with any love for the creatures he has made. With a stolid indifference he chronicles their hopeless sufferings; without apparent disgust he details the loathsome vices which degrade them; the whole thing is so gratuitous. Why all these horrors? Why all this filth? Such recitals cannot even be defended from the point of view of art, setting aside any question of morality—and, books being primarily supposed to be works of art, this should be the deepest condemnation that can be passed upon any work. Now this brutal—gratuitously brutal—class of book stands accused by its entire lack of light and shade, its continual overstrain. Such work is like a man who shouts at the pitch of his voice and calls the noise he produces music; or like the daubs of colour a child covers his paper with, calling it a picture. All intelligence leaves any so-called art when it is without light and shade, and where intelligence is left out art ceases to exist. It is perhaps only fair to admit that inartistic as such work may be, it has a horrid power of its own. This is the very reason, however, why it should be swept away root and branch. It is exactly the same thing in a lesser degree for us to sit down deliberately to read these books, as it was for the much-blamed crowds of sightseers to flock to the bull-fights at Boulogne. The same love of 'a new shiver' is the explanation of our interest in these horrors—or, perhaps, the aboriginal thirst for blood and violence which is said to lurk in every one of us.

I have remarked that these pictures of slum-life are inartistic—we might still consider it a painful duty to read them if they were true. For it is, no doubt, a good thing to know how half the world lives. But this is just where these books fail. Life in the slums has its joys quite as surely, if not as evidently, as life in palaces, and it is ridiculous to suppose that it has not.

German line, "Løbten sin øgen sam ther morgensterre," which is practically identical with 'Inf.' ii. 55, and should have been given with it. It is all very well to say that Danto "could not have been in any way influenced" by certain other mediæval writers; but there is reason to think that he may have been more familiar than is generally supposed with recent and contemporary German books.

Dr. Kuhns gives a list of passages in which Danto's natural history was clearly derived from the 'Trésor' of Brunetto; and any one who has looked into that work could add more. Yet he quotes without comment the sapient remark of a Dr. Schück, in a work with the promising name of 'Jahrbücher für Philologie und Pädagogik,' to the effect that it is not clear "whether Dante, who know the work, can have made any special use of it." We can only rejoin that he certainly did use it.

We had noted several places where the book shows signs of insufficient care in verification, but it is hardly necessary to recount them all. We should like, however, to ask Dr. Kuhns where he finds the Roman Empire "mystically represented as an apple-tree." Quoting 'Purg.' xviii. 78, he says, "Some texts read *secciens*." Can he refer to a single text of any authority that reads anything else?

The Journal of Sir George Rooke. Edited by Oscar Browning. (Navy Records Society.)

THE Navy Records Society may be congratulated on this addition to their meritorious publications. Sir George Rooke's journal consists, for the most part, of brief and technical entries. But it includes copies of some interesting correspondence as well, while Mr. Oscar Browning's introduction will enable the reader to get a clear idea of its general purport. Of the two episodes in Rooke's career with which the volume deals, his bombardment of the Danish fleet before Copenhagen has not been made of much account by historians. Failure, however, would have meant war between Sweden and Denmark, and might have precipitated a general European collision. The ambitious designs of Frederick IV. of Denmark upon Sleswick-Holstein had, indeed, already put Charles XII. of Sweden on his mettle, while the Danish king was looking towards Russia and Saxony. The intervention of William III. of England as one of the guarantors of the Treaty of Altona became, therefore, a measure of statesmanlike precaution. The operations that followed are described, we must confess, with a good deal more spirit in the extracts given by Mr. Browning from the despatches of Mr. Robinson, our envoy at the Court of Stockholm, than in Rooke's dry summary of events. The naval expert, however, will find profit in his record of the difficulties attending the junction between the Swedes and the Anglo-Dutch fleet. The bombardments were not exactly unsuccesses, and the second was probably intended less to damage the capital than to bring the Danish king to reason. It remained for Charles XII. to accomplish that feat by throwing a detachment of his army across the Sound into Seeland. The descent was cleverly covered by the allied fleets, and Frederick IV. speedily came to

terms. Rooke upheld the traditions of the navy for courtesy by the elaborate compliments he addressed to the Swedish admiral, and by a letter in which he regretted that "cette incomparable Princesse la Reine Mère" had been disturbed by the bombardment. He apologized profusely, and in more than tolerable French. His prudence appears in the precautions taken for securing the safe retirement of the Swedes, even though the Danes had signed the treaty of peace.

The attempt on Cadiz was, of course, the somewhat inglorious opening of the war of the Spanish succession. Rooke, it is clear, disliked the enterprise from the first. He commented for Mr. Secretary Vernon's instruction on the danger of coming into the Channel in the winter season; and on French privateers, which would "insult" our coast after the fleet had set sail. Later on he told the Committee of the House of Lords that "the taking Cadiz is more difficult than the taking Brest or Toulon, though I don't say either of them is seizable." He may have entertained doubts as to the fitness of the Duke of Ormonde as a military colleague, but, if so, he kept them to himself. His qualms, at any rate, were justified by the event, for though the expedition captured an unimportant fort or two, no impression whatever was made on the town itself. In spite of the vigorous protest of Prince George of Hesse, the Council of War determined that the Austrian cause must be abandoned to its fate. "If," he wrote,

"we should sail straight away for England, not only the Austrian interest would be lost for ever, and with this all those extirpated that are well inclined, and the promoters of them, but the kingdom of Portugal will declare again for France, the trade of England and their allies will be much weakened, and perhaps obliged to a shameful peace."

The Council of War resolved that no regard should be paid to the prince's memorials, though it had great esteem for his person, and all due respect and honour for his quality, because he was not even mentioned in Sir George Rooke's instructions. By a great stroke of luck there came the capture of the Plate fleet in Vigo Bay to brighten up bedimmed reputations. On that occasion the land and sea forces co-operated to good purpose. Ormonde landed and took a coast battery in the rear, while Rooke burst through the boom, and after a two hours' engagement annihilated the French and Spanish vessels. He returned to find himself the hero of the nation for the time being. The Speaker of the House of Commons adroitly disposed of the failure before Cadiz by the easy argument that somebody or other had been corrupted by French gold. Rooke must have experienced some uncomfortable moments before the Committee of the Lords. He met his questioners adroitly, however, and, when in a corner, referred them to the decisions of the Council of War, which certainly did its best to bungle the business. In the result they reported that he "had done his duty, and behaved like a worthy and brave commander, with honour to the nation."

NEW NOVELS.

Liza of Lambeth. By William Somerset Maugham. (Fisher Unwin.)

TWELVE months of the life of a young factory girl living in Lambeth are depicted by Mr. Maugham with uncompromising fidelity and care. Her lovers, her only relative (a drunken mother), her holidays, and finally her death, are described and discussed in singularly unvarnished language. Indeed, readers who prefer not to be brought into contact with some of the ugliest words and phrases in the language should be warned that Mr. Maugham's book is not for them. On the other hand, those who wish to read of life as it is, without exaggeration and without modification, will have little difficulty in recognizing the merits of the volume. One scene alone will illustrate our meaning. Liza, who has been corrupted by a neighbour (a married man), is dying; in the next room her mother and a midwife are drinking, and the two older women discuss the merits of rival undertakers, and congratulate each other that the girl's life is insured. The scene is described with some skill and without effort. 'Liza of Lambeth' is emphatically unpleasing as literature.

A Rash Verdict. By Leslie Keith. 2 vols. (Bentley & Son.)

'A RASH VERDICT' is in some respects as good as the average novel, in others better. One reason why it perhaps fails to arouse interest is that it wears a slightly out-of-date air and manner, not sufficiently so to be quaint or amusing. To learn that the story had been written perhaps twenty years ago, and had only now been drawn from obscurity and a little remodelled, would surprise no one. It deals with a man's ungenerous action, a woman's mistake resulting therefrom, and what followed on these incidents. The dialogue is quite undistinguished, but the author is not wholly without some understanding of the phases of human nature. The characters are quietly, carefully, and not always unsuccessfully drawn. A few are natural and consistent enough, others are less so.

Stapleton's Luck. By Margery Hollis. 2 vols. (Bentley & Son.)

THERE is not much romance or illusion in the narrative which describes the good and bad luck of Ralph Stapleton; but the reader will find a well-constructed plot, straightforward movement, and a natural sequence of cause and effect. Out in Australia Stapleton has lost his employer's money, which he was bringing from the bank in the shape of a bundle of notes. With it he lost his situation, and to some extent his character; and the greater part of these two volumes is occupied in detailing the efforts which he made to trace the missing notes. With such a plot, all depends upon the play of motive, the delineation of persons, and the brightness of the incidents. Where the hinge of a story is an invisible pocket-book rather than a poetic idea or a psychological study, there is no very exacting demand upon the talents of the author. The author tells her tale with adequate care and spirit. It is interesting, if not specially exciting.

brained, romantic, with the help of an old wizard, Antonio, she tests rascals, punishes meanness, releases prisoners by stratagem, outwits her guardian and the lieutenant of police and notorious highwaymen, and rescues her lover; has a very good time, in fact, and adds much to the gaiety of a court and a city. It is an excellent series of stories, but the best of all is "A Prison of Swords." Mr. Pemberton has never written, we think, with more workmanlike and effective brevity.

LIZA OF LAMBETH. By W. S. Haughan. 3s. 6d. (Unwin.)
Vivisection has its advocates, its objectors, and a class between that cannot object, but would fain limit physical suffering so that an experiment once made should be carefully recorded and never repeated—a quite impossible attitude, but one which has many sympathisers. There are readers likewise that cannot deny to M. Zola and Mr. Arthur Morrison the right to say what they say in "Germinal" and "A Child of the Jago," because whether they speak the whole truth or not, they do speak truth, which is more respectable than telling sentimental lies. But a truth that rouses and shames when we hear it first, may, when repeated too often, pall, to our detriment. The truth about our slums is a horrid truth, but we do not know it all, and some of the unknown must modify it, no doubt. We are willing to bear the horror, so that our consciences may be roused, our sense of pity awakened; nay, even only to know humanity in some more of its possibilities. But the effect goes when horror is given us as daily food. When a master has once made a black truth real to us, if only the thing would stop there! But the smaller men harp on it again and again *ad nauseam*. Mr. Haughan is not such a very small man, either. He is very clever, and even if he used less bad language his pictures would still be effective. But he has nothing new to tell. This has been recorded before, and it pains and depresses us rather uselessly. Liza is a pleasant-tempered girl, who seems predestined to sordid trouble. It is all very hopeless, and unrelieved by any sense of strong feeling working in the writer. If we wrong him, we can only say he fails to produce that effect. And yet he is clever, and should be heard of again—in other scenes, let us hope.

THE CHARMER. By Stan F. Bullcock. (Bowden.)

Before giving our opinion about this story we should prefer to say deservedly pleasant things about Mr. Bullock's former work. "The Awkward Squad" and "By Thrasna River" contain excellent writing. They are the books of a man of talent and of heart. Perhaps we are wrong in calling them, in relation to this story, his "former work." Indeed, we suspect this is very early stuff indeed. The plot is made out of the poor jest of a young husband and wife masquerading as brother and sister in an obscure Irish watering-place, thereby cruelly tempting the male youth of the place to false hopes. There is a great deal of uninteresting, nay, depressing laughter about this "comedy," as it is called, a comedy over which we have grown almost lachrymose. And there is a good deal of sodden sentiment. Mr. Bullock need not have written it.

THREE PARTNERS. By Bret Harte. 3s. 6d. (Chatto.)

Critics must repeat themselves in giving welcome to each new book of Bret Harte's. There is so little variation, and there is no falling off. "Three Partners" is as good a bit of work as the one before last and the one before that, as full of vigour and with as strong an appeal to common human feelings. Amid the wild, sordid life of miners and financiers connected with mining, the loyal *camaraderie* of the three partners stands out fair and bright. Envy, greed, and hate keep the story moving on at an exciting pace, but the decent people have pluck and are excellent shots, and a fair amount of human happiness settles down on them before the end.

THE CAPTIVE OF PEKIN; or A Swallow's Wing. By Charles Hannan. Illustrated. 6s. (Jarrold.)

This is a capital story if you can read it without being revolted by the torture of which it tells. Probably the least impressionable reader will do a little judicious skipping for the sake of his nerves, and that, with the confidence which he is sure to have of the ultimate safety of the prisoner, should permit a certain amount of enjoyment and a great deal of interest. The search for an unknown man, captive in an unknown place, in Pekin, for unknown reasons, is most thrilling, the circumstances of the rescue most chivalrous and romantic, and Chin-Chin-Wa, the Anglo-Chinese rescuer, is quite the imposing figure Mr. Hannan meant him to be.

THE "PARADISE" COAL-BOAT. By Catelife Hyne. 6s. (Bowden.)

Mr. Hyne does not worry over-much about having a very good story to tell before he sits down to amuse. He knows the world, especially on its more unconventional roads; and from episodes that are thin enough, regarded merely as stories, he makes vigorous and interesting pictures of life and character. Unlike most of the books of the day that tell of the rougher, wilder sides of existence, these tales are neither blangy nor allpshod. Native vigour has not seemed to him enough to cancel the obligations of writing well. "The Ransom," "The Defier," "For a Woman of the South" are all excellent in their way; but the sketch of adventure in Spanish lands, "Journeyman Smugglers," seems to us the best of all.

PRETTY MICHAL. By Maurus Jókai. Translated by R. Nisbet Bain. 6s. (Jarrold.)

This is a truly barbaric story—barbaric in its vigour as in its sanguinarity. Mr. Bain thinks objectors to it may be found among the readers of the anæmic fiction of to-day, but it is not necessary to be anæmic to shrink somewhat from this grim story. Yet in spite of occasional repulsion we have found it the most irresistible of Jókai's books, known to us through translations. Audacious, fantastic, incalculable, altogether alien to our sense of romance, this tale of old Hungary compels our admiration. From the time the young husband, the pastor of Nagy Leta, is forced to turn headsman the story moves on in a merry dance of wizardry and death. In the old archives of Kassa the writer found traces of real things, strangely poetical and terrible, and he has made them live again in this wild drama.

THE SECRETAR. By W. Beatty. 6s. (Gardner.)

Patience is needed for grappling with this story of the "Casket Letters," but it is also not without its reward. As a novel "The Secretar" is a poor thing, and a tedious one. The scanty narrative of John Kilgour's love affairs serves no end at all. But as a conscientious account of the tangled web of Scottish politics in Mary's time, the book has distinct merits, and even the portrait of that "slidery" man, the "Secretar," Maitland of Lethington, has been drawn with considerable success.

THE BOOKMAN'S TABLE.

JOURNEYS THROUGH FRANCE. By H. Taine. 7s. 6d. (Unwin.)

Taine's "Carnets de Voyage" surpass all but the best of their kind—an unsatisfactory kind; for there is not one person in a thousand that cares to hear what another said and felt at dawn on the shores of Madagascar or by night on the Adriatic; and there is not one person in ten thousand who can express his feelings, if he happened to have any, and his vision, in such a way as to make it a reproach to all the indifferent rest not to listen. The *Impression de Voyage* habit is a modern method of boring, rather surprising in a business-like age. But Taine had eyes and a delightful style. These little descriptive accounts of what remained in his memory of the various provincial towns which he visited as examiner for admission to the Military School of Saint Cyr, have a double force, that of the man who could read social life like a book, and that of the artist who had seen too much to pose, and seen enough not to rave indiscriminately. Charming to read for their unaffectedness, their grace, their brevity, they are also true. Test them by the bit of France you know best, be it Nancy, or Marseilles, or Carnac, they are incomplete, but you will know he has been there. There are a few telling phrases, such as "The Middle Age was an attic of the Muses," but in general no strain after effect. And there are a few scraps of personal opinion, and personal melancholy, and personal prejudices that are more interesting than the subject of his papers. As this—"I find myself coming back again and again to the idea that France is a democracy of peasants and working-men, under a motherly administration, with a restricted town population which lives cheaply and grows rusty, and with needy officials who are on the look-out for promotion, and never take root." But yet he likes the *Lagins* best. In pleasure, the others are "mere brutes or merely virtuous."

ENGLISH EPIGRAMS AND EPITAPHS. Selected by Aubrey Stewart. (Chapman.)

This is a pleasant collection, in which mostly all the old

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BOOKS OF THE WEEK.

The Life of Saladin. By Beha-ed-din (1137-1193 A.D.). Edited by Sir C. Wilson. Five Maps. London: Palestine Exploration Fund. 8vo, pp. xii, 420. 5s.

our own part, we have little belief in any 'fancy franchises,' however ingenious, especially among a population long habituated to the easily comprehensible theory of universal suffrage.

Part I., which deals with York, the east coast, and Durham city (Dulau and Co., 8vo, pp. xiii, 137, 2s. 6d.). It has been revised and slightly enlarged, in the interests of the cyclist and golfer.

Part II., which deals with York, the east coast, and Durham city (Dulau and Co., 8vo, pp. xiii, 137, 2s. 6d.). It has been revised and slightly enlarged, in the interests of the cyclist and golfer.

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BOOKS OF THE DAY.

By W. L. COURTNEY. THE INVISIBLE MAN. (G. A. PEARSON).

And the medium produced by character sketches and noisals with a purpose, it is always pleasant to come across the work of Mr. Wells. There is, at least, the certainty of an idea. Mr. Wells has an imaginative mind, which produces 'inventive' forecasts.

NEW NOVELS.

THE INVISIBLE MAN. (G. A. PEARSON).

And the medium produced by character sketches and noisals with a purpose, it is always pleasant to come across the work of Mr. Wells. There is, at least, the certainty of an idea.

A PAUPER'S CHAMPAGNE SUPPER.

Yesterday Dr. Wynn Westcott, senior, had an interview at the St. Luke's Hospital regarding the case of a pauper who had been severely injured by a gas fire.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT.

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private marriage, two descendants of which, in the third generation—two helpless little girls—are thrust upon Lady Rosalind's care. In her pride she will accept as little as possible of the assistance of her cousin, who is supposed to have succeeded to the title and to what is left of the estates; and, as this cousin is a fine, straightforward, manly young fellow, the reader will be disposed to protest against the cruelty of fate when yet another complication is disclosed and it turns out that the son of a ne'er-do-well uncle of the young earl is the rightful heir of the family honours. How all these perplexities and rivalries are ultimately adjusted and the rough places made plain, and how, amid her trials, Lady Rosalind learns to find consolation and happiness, is duly set forth with the author's wonted narrative skill and simple realism. There is nothing profound or subtle in the tale, but it is wholesome and natural, and two at least of the characters—Lady Rosalind herself and HESSIE SELWORTHY—are freshly conceived and thoughtfully wrought out.

Liza of Lambeth. By W. S. MAUGHAM. 7x4½ in., 242 pp. London, 1897. Fisher Unwin.

Only one circumstance induces us to notice this most unpleasant book, and that is its author's evident ability to do better. He does not as yet write with much skill, because he does not thoroughly understand the poor people whom he describes, and, what is worse, does not seem to sympathize with them. He has sharp eyes, but they do not always penetrate the superficial dirt of toil and poverty, and he so greatly exaggerates the vices of the poor that we cannot accept his characters as typical work-people. But one thing he has done beyond all doubt. Roughly and inartistically, with violent colour and the blackest of black shadows, he has succeeded in drawing a figure that sticks with painful reality in the memory. Liza is a factory girl of 18, who lived in a Lambeth slum. She went wrong—it was not far to go—and died in the expected manner at the end of the book. That is literally all, but Liza's portrait is so complete and so strong that even now her ghost refuses to be laid; and that we take to be a considerable achievement for a writer of fiction. We may say with Catullus:—

Odi et amo. Quare id faciam fortasse requiris.
Nescio; sed fieri sentio et excrucior.

And now that we have freely praised the one merit of the book, we must claim an equal freedom of censure, and must say plainly that the work is not merely disfigured, but is rendered absolutely unendurable by its sustained grossness, both of language and detail. How unnecessary this is, and how disgusting, Mr. Maugham does not seem to know. He must learn the value of reticence. Slang we can tolerate, for reviewers are born to suffering and get used to it, but in the midst of it all there are a number of needless and unpardonable things which we cannot by any means stomach. It is no excuse for Mr. Maugham that some of his rivals in this particular line of business have done much the same thing and, if he does not take care, will out-do him. Somehow, all writers of this sort remind us of the competition in the Dunciad, "who best can plunge through thick and thin"—only the Dunciad is an elegant and savoury piece of wit compared to these modern performances.

Broken Arcs: A West Country Chronicle. By CHRISTOPHER HARE. Cr. 8vo., 317 pp. London and New York, 1897. Harpers. 6/-

This is a readable love story, following along the beaten track of many another similar tale of rustic life. The tyrannical Squire, who wants his son to clear off his mortgages by marriage; the pretty and admirable young person at the vicarage who spoils the Squire's plan; her father, the Vicar, immersed in theological composition; and the young villager who follows the Squire's son to the Crimea—they have all done duty for many a novelist, and doubtless will again. We have nothing to say against them if the chronicle of their doings is as devoid of the inanities too often characterizing this type of novel, and indeed as well suited for the entertainment of an idle hour, as "Broken Arcs." The title, by the bye, is suggested by a line of Browning's, "On the earth the broken arcs, in the heaven a perfect round," a motto which applies rather to the "young Squire's" romance than to that of his comrade in arms, which forms the main pivot of the story. The account of the trouble which comes to Harry Tinham's wife, who promised to conceal her marriage while her husband was fighting in the Crimea, is the best part of the book, though it is a pity that the author, when he has sent the husband away to the wars, should so far forget him as to give him on two occasions a wrong surname.

The Temple of Folly. By PAUL CRESWICK. 8vo., viii.+271 pp. London, 1897. Fisher Unwin. 6/-

George Bubb Dodington, who began life as plain George Bubb and ended it by insinuating himself into the Peerage as Lord Melcombe, was a picturesque character enough to incline one to expect much from a novel which adopts him as a leading character. Browning fitly enough compares him to the bower-bird, as described by Darwin:—

"Birds born to strut prepare a platform-stage
With sparkling stones and speckled shells, all sorts
Of slimy rubbish, odds and ends and orts,
Whereon to pose and posture and engage
The priceless female simper."

With his odd wig, which Hogarth has immortalized, his peacock's feathers and *lapis lazuli* columns, his bedside carpet "a splendid patchwork of his old-embroidered pocket-flaps and cuffs," he makes a striking figure among the courtiers of the Georgian era, even if we take a grain of salt with Thomson's fulsome dedication of "Summer" to him as one

"In whom the human graces all unite."

Mr. Creswick has not made as much as he might of this remarkable personage, in whom, with Browning, he seems to "see but one fool more, as well as knave." The Temple from which the title of the story is taken is, of course, Medmenham Abbey, that very Eighteenth-Century Abbey of Thelema where Jack Wilkes and the Hell Fire Club tried to revive the ceremonies of the Bona Dea. Satanism is rather in fashion among novelists nowadays, but Mr. Creswick handles the Black Mass with a much lighter and more gingerly touch than M. Huysmans and his followers. The best thing in his book is the character of Marget, a delightfully boyish girl whose antics are very amusing. The story itself trips on rather a shadowy foot, but it is cleverly written and quite as readable as the average historical novel of to-day.

George Malcolm. By GABRIEL SETOUN. 8vo., 348 pp. London, 1897. Bliss, Sands. 6/-

Like a recent work of the Kailyard School, Mr. Setoun's story is the history of a boy brought up in a Scottish village to which he was not native. The account of the inhabitants and manners of Cuttril and Invercolm, the two places in which the action goes forward, is evidently based on careful observation, and shows that Mr. Setoun has a distinct, if somewhat conventional, sense of humour. His religious village grocer, "Pharisee and Publican," on whom the author seems to have lavished many pains, is scarcely convincing, for he reminds one more of the typical jokes against the Scottish inclination to make the best of both worlds than of anything likely to be found in a real village. Nor does it seem a very brilliant jest to say that John Murdoch, "being a man who understood that the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, aided and abetted Providence in the matter of potatoes and cabbages." Much better is the portrait of Mrs. Sibbald, a Scottish Mrs. Malaprop, whose nice derangement of epithets is really amusing. She was troubled by "a petulous and audacious girl," who was in fact "a Thomas-boy," and one of her griefs was that her husband had played the fiddle, "a light and frivolous instrument that you hide in a common green bag." Mary Moultrie Ramage Ross, the "Thomas-boy" aforesaid, is prettily drawn, and the incidental villagers, though dull, appear to have verisimilitude. Unfortunately, Mr. Setoun, who has already shown himself to be possessed of a pretty, if slight, talent for describing Scottish manners, has felt it necessary to introduce a thrilling plot, and has given his boy-hero a most unnatural and melodramatic part to play in clearing his convict father's reputation. The whole of the Andrew Gemmell business is what Mr. Weller used to call "rather too thin." It is a pity that Mr. Setoun has thus spoiled a book which is distinctly above the average in parts.

A Creel of Irish Stories. By JANE BARLOW. 8x5½ in., 320 pp. London, 1897. Methuen & Co. 6/-

Miss Jane Barlow is already favourably known by her volume of "Irish Idylls." Her new book of Irish stories will probably be received with similar favour. She has a firm grasp of Irish peasant character, with its kindness and thriftlessness, its strange superstitions, and its affectionate devotion; and all her stories are written with knowledge and, what is better, with sympathy. They can none of them, we imagine, be called exciting. They have little incident and, in the dramatic sense little action. But they are written in a pleasant, easy style, and

temperament merging into an impassioned and polemical pamphlet on the marriage question. Lastly, the author's arguments have all been set forth in one of her previous novels. All that she has done is to give them a cruder and more lurid setting.

The evolution of many novels may be compared to a syllogism which starts from premisses that one has no difficulty in conceding, but arrives at a highly disputable conclusion. The process, to our way of thinking, is inverted in Miss Montrésor's exceedingly clever and original story, *At the Cross Roads*. The plot, though eminently unhackneyed, strikes us as extremely improbable and artificial. But its development is not merely ingenious, but engrossing. Briefly put, the story deals with the tardy reparation of a terrible injustice which has blighted the life and embittered the character of an innocent man and marred the happiness of the faithful woman who has stood by him through good and evil report. Jack Cardew, a rising young author, engaged to Gillian Molyneux, is sentenced to four years' penal servitude for a fraudulent attempt to recover a heavy insurance on the MS. of a novel which he alleges to have been burnt by accident. During his imprisonment he attempts to escape, and kills a warder. Apparently he is half insane at the time, and is only punished by an extension of his sentence. On being released he goes out to Africa, makes a fortune in diamond mines, and returns to find Gillian, who has quarrelled with and left her mother and stepfather, waiting to fulfil her promise. They are married, and Jack's wealth and his wife's social gifts secure them a recognised position in society. Ultimately Gillian discovers that her own mother was aware of the fact of her lover's innocence, but abstained from coming forward to give evidence in his favour, and while Jack readily responds to the wretched woman's appeal to shield her guilt from her husband and son, Gillian is with the utmost difficulty persuaded to acquiesce in this decision, although other facts transpire which render Jack's public rehabilitation possible without the exposure of Gillian's mother. Husband and wife are estranged on this point, but in the end a reconciliation is effected, mainly through the mediation of a saintly friend of Gillian's. The story lends itself to criticism in a variety of ways. The incident of the burnt MS. is clumsily contrived; we gravely doubt whether Miss Montrésor's law is correct; the motives of Mrs. Molyneux's guilty silence seem wholly inadequate; and we are never made to feel that Jack had in him the literary gifts which won him fame before he was five-and-twenty. Finally, though the author has spared no pains, in emphasising the hardness in Gillian's otherwise fine and generous nature, the mercilessness of her hatred of her mother comes rather as a shock to the reader. Still, with all these deductions, *At the Cross Roads* is a novel quite out of the common, and although its outlines are melodramatic, their treatment is forcible, sober, and concentrated.

Mr. Mason, who proved himself in his first book a worthy rival of Messrs. Weyman and Levett Yeats, and in his second gave us, in a wholly modern setting, some very clever character studies, reverts in his new volume to his early manner, and tells in *Lawrence Clavering* a story in which the development of character is subordinated to intrigue, incident, and adventure. The scene, after the opening chapters, is laid in the Lake Country, the time is 1715, and the central figure is a young Jacobite, a relative of Bolingbroke's, who quits a monastery in Paris to take up the inheritance of an estate in the neighbourhood of Keswick. The plot is intricate, and even confused, but it is mainly concerned with the efforts of Lawrence Clavering to repair the grievous wrong done to an artist named Herbert, who, while seeking just satisfaction from Clavering for compromising his wife, is entrapped by the machinations of Clavering's cousin, the villain of the plot, and cast into prison. Lawrence is a most unconventional hero, if indeed he can be called a hero at all, for he cannot even fence—a terrible shortcoming in the central figure of a romance of the last century—and his conduct in the earlier chapters borders on the contemptible. The whole episode with Mrs. Herbert, again, is rather unintelligible, but as soon as Lawrence sets about his task of reparation the story improves greatly. Still, it is difficult to feel sympathy for such a demi-semi-hero as Lawrence Clavering, and the verdict of most readers will probably be that he got a great deal more than his deserts in winning the hand of so charming a lady as Mistress Dorothy Curwen.

Miss Violet Hunt's new story, differing widely in surroundings and method from her earlier efforts, has a theme that would have pleased Le Fanu in his most morbid moments and an atmosphere as bleak and cheerless as that of *Wuthering Heights*. We are further reminded of the Brontës by the fact that the narrator is a governess, quick-witted though plain-featured. But the working out of *Unkist, Unkind!* is all Miss Hunt's own, and derives a characteristic flavour from the way in which a thoroughly modern and frivolous woman of fashion is abruptly contrasted with an anachronistic antiquarian passionately devoted to the excavation of tumuli, and with the uncanny elf who acts as his secretary. Sibella Drake, the central figure and anti-heroine of the plot, is a powerfully conceived and consistently carried out portrait. A foundling, adopted and educated by Sir Anthony Ercildon, the antiquary, she assimilates his enthusiasm for cadaverous explorations, and becomes an adept at alchemy, astrology, and demonology. But the real passion of her life is her absolute devotion to her master, who on his side merely looks on her as an exceedingly useful assistant, and when Lady Darcie, the beautiful butterfly of fashion, seeks refuge from her Bluebeard of a husband at her eccentric kinsman's house, and, according to her invariable practice, endeavours to bring Sir Anthony to her feet, Sibella's jealousy, acting on a temperament unhinged by morbid imaginings and unholy pursuits, prompts her to wreak swift and deadly vengeance on the interloper. Sibella may not be exactly "convincing," but she fits admirably into the framework of the story. Sir Anthony, on the other hand, though a picturesque figure, is far less intelligible. We want a fuller explanation of his sudden abandonment of diplomacy and the hunting field for the life of a self-absorbed recluse. And, on the whole, we cannot help feeling that the story would have been more impressive if it had been entirely detached from the prosaic and vulgar actualities of modern life. Lady Darcie's society *argot* and her "bike" emphasise the contrast between the mundane and the uncanny elements of the story, but they detract somewhat from the mystery and romance which are so essential to the success of excursions into the realm of the occult and fantastic.

As a well-known bookseller remarked to us the other day, "novels are coming out so thick just now that they don't give each other a chance." This must be our excuse for dismissing several volumes with only a few words apiece, which at another time might have claimed more detailed notice. Mrs. Walford in *Iva Kildare* shows her usual vivacity and optimism in delineating the matrimonial schemes of a warm-hearted Irish widow. Mrs. Walford's style is undistinguished, and her characters undignified, but she has a fund of hearty geniality that makes her book very pleasant reading. Of a very different type is Mr. W. S. Maugham's *Liza of Lambeth*, a relentlessly realistic "tale of mean streets." Mr. Maugham differs from Mr. Morrison, however, in that he represents his slum-folk as capable of boisterous enjoyment. For the rest, though he cannot be said to paint vice or crime in attractive colours, and is, we should say, animated by a fierce compassion for his hapless heroine and her sisters, the squalor of this little book is often positively nauseating. In the *dramatis personæ* of *Wayfaring Men* the dramatic profession is largely represented, and the handsome tribute which Miss Edna Lyall pays to the good qualities of actors and actresses ought to satisfy Mrs. Kendal herself. The moral of the story is unimpeachable, and its earnestness of aim is much to be commended. It labours, however, under the serious defect of looking at a seamy side of life through spectacles of a deeply roseate hue, for it is to be feared that the picture of an actor's domestic life in *A Mummer's Wife* is often nearer the mark than that given by Miss Edna Lyall. Mr. Clive Philipps-Wolley's *One of the Broken Brigade* is a stirring and manly story of heroic self-sacrifice: the scene is mainly laid in British Columbia, and Mr. Philipps-Wolley is happier in his landscape than in his characterisation, or in the contrivance of incident. The death of his hero, who is run down by an express while fighting with wolves on a railway track, at a time when he is delirious with fever, is rather too steep a piece of agony piling. Another stirring romance, rounded off with a happy ending, is Mr. Marchmont's *By Right of Sword*. The hero is an Englishman, long resident in Russia, who enters the Czar's service, saves his Imperial master's life

vised "... no man could be more solicitous for those under him than the leaders of these mills are ..." and thought "... they have reached perfection in this way." On the other hand, another clergyman states: "The housing conditions are terrible. The work conditions, the hours of work are absolutely impossible and I think it tends to make the men become disgusted with this country." In many cases it took a good deal of courage for the pastors and priests in the steel area to speak on the strike. The president of one steel and iron company told an investigator and advised notification to whom it might concern: "I am a Presbyterian. If I thought the Presbyterian Church was spending any money on this investigation, I'd never contribute another dollar to the Presbyterian Church." It may be that practically the power of the church over industrial conditions is limited, but it is encouraging to observe the vigor of some individual religious leaders in living and acting according to the doctrine of ethical responsibility of the church for social conditions. It should also be noted that a church organization was responsible for this investigation.

It is curious how little responsibility the American citizen feels for the social conditions in the steel industry in the mining regions of Mingo and Logan counties in West Virginia. These inhabitants are aliens or mountaineers with queer and strange customs, quite foreign to what is considered typically American. The part of the United States which he includes in his psychological does not comprise these regions. They might as well be in Mexico or in Russia. In fact, more interest might be taken in them if they were in either of these countries.

The follow-up work of the commission is therefore deficient. Psychologists tell us that our forgetting is highly selective, that we forget quickly the events that it is unpleasant to remember. The steel strike is a memory rapidly becoming dim. But the strike was settled by force and not by a consideration of the facts. There will be other strikes. The question heard so frequently a decade or so ago, in the era of what the comfortable classes called "muck raking magazines," is just as vital as ever, namely, "What are you going to do about it?" The commission put the matter up to Mr. Gary, the President, the Commissioner of Labor, and to Congress. But the industrial defencelessness of the unorganized immigrant worker remains. The twelve-hour day and the seven-day week are bad for the country. And particularly we should ask ourselves these larger questions: Is the nation helpless before the conditions in a basic industry? Can a democratic society be moved to do industrial justice without the pressure of crisis itself?

W. F. O.

Liza of Lambeth

Liza of Lambeth, by W. Somerset Maugham. New York: G. H. Doran Co. \$1.75.

NOTHING shows less literary taint than this reprinted novel of Somerset Maugham's. It crosses the Thames of combed and curried London to plunge into the jungle of Lambeth. At one end of Westminster you have an educated England of subtleties and refinements, of refinement and elision. At the other end

you face this primitive, shameless, raw, naked England, this Shakespearian unexpurgated land of savory speech, brutal candor and warm desire. Here hardly less than in the seventeenth century you have the England so often disguised in low comedy but really something so natural, so pungent, so powerfully human, that it can hardly be put into print. Somerset Maugham comes to it not as a humorist but as an unsentimental humanist, looking it in the face. And with no word to show that he stands outside this scheme of life as a cold spectator, with instead a very great power to realize its intense naturalness, he frames one of its most revealing stories in this brief, idiomatic novel.

Victorian England, we are often told, was extremely respectable. A few quaint gestures of this respectability are borrowed by Lambeth. The still-life of fruit under a glass cover is there, and some of the still-life morality—the derision of the "new woman" on a bicycle, and the feeling that "a woman's place is 'er 'ome." But this comes into Mr. Maugham's narrative as only incidental to the tribal existence that he gives us with such faithfulness. Liza sails into the narrative as a spirited, spunky girl of eighteen, the little friend of all her world. She is at once fiery, indecent, proud, innocent. She can cry, "you jolly well dry up, old jellybelly" and "this is too bloomin' slow, it gives me the sick," (expurgated), and she can blush to the roots of her hair when the strange man grabs her and kisses her in a kissing game. But it is the world that surrounds her that gives Vere Street its pungency.

"It was the dead season in Vere Street as much as in Belgravia, and really if it had not been for babies just come or just about to come, and an opportune murder in a neighboring doss-house, there would have been nothing whatever to talk about. As it was, the little groups talked quietly, discussing the atrocity or the merits of the local midwives, comparing the circumstances of the various confinements." The liveliness of these comparisons is a choral voice in which are mingled the maudlin droolings of Liza's mother, the shrieked laughter of the street, the stolid recrimination of the wives whose husbands have been beating them, the wild excitement of the melodrama, the magnificent gluttony of the Chingford picnic.

But this choral voice is not heard as a discordancy. Where Mr. Maugham is emphatically not a mere naturalist, is in his appreciation of the motives behind these pointed accents of life. It is one thing to see with one's own assaulted eyes the swarming pubs of London, with men and women jammed together as they swill Saturday away; or the swarming nights of Hampstead, with men and women laced together, rows upon rows. What Mr. Maugham does is to induce us to follow Liza into exactly these scenes and to make us see them internally, not externally. So Liza, who falls in love with the burly newcomer who kisses her so resoundingly is very soon not the girl of the gorgeous picnic who says, "Well, I believe I'm boozed." She is the girl to whom this man with a wife and five children says, "Liza, will yer?" and then, shaking himself, shook her to a decision by "a violent, swinging blow in the stomach." Victorian? Not any more than the succeeding scenes in which the tribe gets wind of Liza's love affair or the scene in which her lover's twenty-year wife meets her and, "yer dirty little bitch, you," beats her to pulp.

One can imagine how tasteless and vile these incidents

would be if not understood. It is the genius of *Liza of Lambeth* that they are penetrated with understanding. Love comes to Liza with the shivering beauty of a new dawn. For her as well as for Jim Blakeston, this bearded man of forty, it is the transfiguration of life. But the game is loaded against them. At first they have each other in the bold anonymity of the parks. But Vere Street begins to know, and Liza begins to be cut. Then they chaff her, with a nudging, badgering brutality that leaves little unsaid. "Liza 'as all the pleasures of a 'usband an' none of the trouble.' 'Blime if I know what yer mean!' said Liza. 'Na, of course not; you don't know nothin', do yer?' 'Innocent as a bibe. Our Father which art 'in 'eaven!' 'Aven't been in London long, 'ave yer?' . . . 'O me darlin', I love yer fit to kill, but sike care your missus ain't round the corner.' This was particularly bold and they all laughed." They laugh, and she doesn't know what to do. There isn't anything to do. In the camaraderie of their love, (driven now to the winter hospitality of the third-class Waterloo waiting-room), they admit that they're up against it. "So yer see, Jim, we're in a bloomin' 'ole, an' there ain't no way aht of it that I can see.'" But, like the thick, yellow November fog "which filled the waiting-room, entering the lungs, and making the mouth taste nasty and the eyes smart," their environment poured poisonously in on them, until Jim's wife dug her nails into Liza and "they swayed about, scratching, tearing, biting, sweat and blood pouring down their faces, and their eyes fixed on one another, bloodshot and full of rage."

When Liza returns after this fight to her mother, she is at last on her mother's level. It's then that the old gal gives the young gal plenty of whisky and that the young gal cries, "Buck up, old gal . . . I feel like a new woman now." In the blurred hour of drunken confidences, the mother speaks out of this hidden England. "'Yus,' went on Mrs. Kemp, 'I've 'ad thirteen children an' I'm proud of it. As your poor dear father used ter say, it shows as 'ow one's got the blood of a Briton in one.'" Liza forgets her trouble as the maternal voice drones to her. She sits up singing, her dress all disarranged from the fight; "her face covered with the scars of scratches . . ." leering with heavy, sodden ugliness. But from this hour she never recovers. During the night, the cold and horrible and lonely night, the anguish of her labor begins, and before she knows anything more, but to the awful droning of her drunken mother and the wild shapes of her two days' agony, she dies.

It is not pathos that Mr. Maugham creates in this masterly end, with the mother and the midwife talking coffins and insurance before the girl is dead, with Jim the lover on his knees by the bedside, calling to her who can't hear. There is pathos but it is inwoven with a plain and terrible recognition of the life force that is beyond pathos, beyond felicity. That force, so raging, so untamed in Mr. Maugham's *Lambeth*, is not introduced simply for it piquancy and its novelty. It is introduced, one feels, because in *Lambeth* Mr. Maugham found a something which in modern literature is so consistently ignored. It is the thing that made Hogarth so irresistibly interesting, the thing that flows like rich juice from any slice of Shakespeare's outspokenness. It is something deeply English, or at any rate deeply human. To have understood that and kept faith with it is the triumph of *Liza of Lambeth*. It is not only racy and colored, it is sincere.

FRANCIS HACKETT.

Romain Rolland

Romain Rolland, by Stefan Zweig. New York: Thomas Seltzer & Co. \$4.00.

THE criticism of Dante excited by the sixth centenary of his death has taken account largely of the extraordinary unity of his conception of life, of the fact that he represents, in the literal sense, a universe. It is toward such unity that great souls have always aspired, and the apparent impossibility of achieving it has been the chief element in that *maladie du siècle* of which the literature of the late nineteenth century is full, and which recognizes itself in such terms as degeneration and decadence. Realism, impressionism, nationalism, pragmatism are all expressions of the tendency to accept the multiplicity of phenomena in a practical world, and to give over as vain the attempt to achieve any synthesis of them. It is the effort to reintegrate the world that gives Romain Rolland his distinction among the writers of today. With dramatic suddenness he was called to testify in his life to the truth of his thought, and like the other exile whose death at Ravenna we are honoring, he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

Mr. Zweig's biography is no ordinary one. The outward events of Romain Rolland's life are merely referred to in passing, and the narrative is kept on the high plane of his intellectual achievement. It is clear however from its pages that Rolland was from the first consciously possessed by his enterprise, and that the elements of his training and association contributed steadily to its fulfillment. He was an internationalist in his early enthusiasms for Beethoven, Shakespeare, Spinoza. At the *Ecole Normale* he was the pupil of Brunetière and the friend of Claudel, Saurès, Péguy, the group which was working for a reaction in literature from the materialism and particularism of the naturalists. He passed through his period of storm and stress, and in his doubt and perplexity he turned to Tolstoi, who accepted him as a spiritual son. Later he was appointed to a fellowship which took him to Rome where he met the great influence of his early life, Malvidá von Meysenburg, then an old woman, an unconquerable idealist, whose mind was radiant with the memories of great friendships. He returned to become professor of the history of music at the *Ecole Normale*, and with Péguy and others to initiate that spiritual renaissance of which they saw France so greatly in need. They published an obscure periodical, "*Cahiers de la quinzaine*" in which all of Rolland's early work appeared, including *Jean Christophe*. He turned first to the drama, with a series of *Tragedies of Faith* written for the people, "to arouse a passionate aspiration toward greatness" in them. He initiated a series of drama of the revolution. One of these, *Danton*, was introduced by a speech from Jaurès; and *Les Loups*, which represented symbolically the Dreyfus case, was attended at its first performance by the actors in that national drama of atonement, Zola, Picquart, and Scheurer-Kestner. Nevertheless Rolland's plays spent themselves in the void. From this defeat—his marriage broken, his career checked—he fell back into solitude and poverty, and for fifteen years his name was unheard.

During this time he devoted himself to biography. In the drama of the revolution he had sought to represent a great movement, to write an *Iliad* of the French people, "to exhibit as it were the drama of a convulsion of nature, to depict a social storm." In his biographies of Beethoven, Michael-Angelo and Tolstoi he depicted the individual. In the drama of revolution he had set forth his distrust of the national ideal of victory. He makes Lux, the German

"NOTRE PATRIE."

NOTRE PATRIE. Par CHARLES PÉGUY. (Nouvelle Revue Française. 3f. 50c.)

Already many French writers have laid down their lives for their country, men of talent and genius; but the talent and the genius which France could least afford to lose was that of Charles Péguy. For Péguy was not a writer. In a country where literature has the burden and dignity of a conscious tradition, as in France, nearly every writer, whether he is of first, second, or third rank, is bound to have no small portion of his mind continually occupied with "being a writer." He has to be careful not to lapse from his inherited manner, to be mindful that he must appear *bel homme* and jealous of his *haut lieu*. That general preoccupation gives the recognizable and distinctive currency to French style. Charles Péguy appears to have had none of it. That part of his mind which should, according to the rules, have been incessantly applied to being a writer seems to have been caught into the fire and fury of his passion to be himself. He has no style, if the word be used as the critics generally use it, to denote a certain common form into which the most various talents must be poured to be commonly understood. And because he has none of this style, he is all style, if we may accept the vaguer and more pregnant definition that style is personality. Charles Péguy's personality emerges everywhere in his work; above all, it emerges into the method of its publication, those "Cahiers de la Quinzaine" in which, heedless of schools and doctrines, he walked, ambled, trotted, galloped, all at his own sweet will, equally in those which he wrote himself and those which he invited others to contribute, for these latter also were the record of his own intimate preferences. Truly, all Péguy's work (which "La Nouvelle Revue Française" announces that it will publish in entirety *après la guerre*) is a *cahier*.

The chief, perhaps the only, penalty for this is that Péguy's greatest fame has been slow in coming. Rather it will still be slow to come. Neither in his manner of writing nor his method of publication did he adopt the lingua franca of *format 18 Jésus* which would have carried his fame to the ends of the earth; so that a new *cahier* which was written in 1905 can be republished with all the familiarity and, evidently, not a little of the rarity which is usually the privilege of a first edition. The choice of "Notre Patrie" was admirable. Far more than the *lynx* to Ste. Jeanne d'Arc, which is now tolerably familiar by report at least, "Notre Patrie" gives the measure of the man his style, his personality. Wit, humour, rhetoric, criticism of politics and literature which seem each to challenge the other for proficiency and insight, extravagance of formlessness which recalls both so much as "Trustee Shanly" and reinforces the comparison by the exactness of its underlying form, and beneath this kaleidoscopic exterior a depth of seriousness, of patriotism, of love for France and the French people he so clearly sees, which makes of other and more famous patriotic literature a lifeless heap of glittering phrase—all this, and a great deal more, is in the one hundred-odd pages of the "Troisième Cahier de la Septième Série des Cahiers de la Quinzaine."

"It was a revolution," it begins, "and this time I shall not write the *cahier* which I was keeping for myself." And then we are given the outline of the *cahier* that was to have been, concerning French politics, at the time when M. Combes had succeeded M. Waldeck-Rousseau, and had himself fallen from office. He would have told how the true Republicans, the men who made of the Republic their tradition and their religion, because their eyes were immutably fixed on every menace of military Caesarism, because they were terrified and fascinated by its every symptom, were doomed inevitably to fall into reality of civil Caesarism. He would have shown how a man can exercise absolute and relentless power in the Republic, provided only that he is not a fine figure of a man, that he is not a soldier, that he wears even a civil uniform awkwardly, above all that he cannot ride a horse, and finally that he is of such a type (*s'il était populairement laid, cela n'en vaudrait que mieux*), that he can be called *petit père*, for the popularity of this genre is the most essential of all popularities for the ambitious man. He would have proved all this in detail, and he enumerates the details of his evidence. He would have written his political *cahier* quietly by the fire—but, the King of Spain was receiving a week of welcome from Paris. He was being escorted to all the monuments of Paris. *Maisons, vieilles maisons de cérémonies*—M. Péguy's lyrical, rhetorical vein bursts forth magnificently, to a typical end:—

monuments monarchiques, monuments royaux, monuments religieux, monuments de l'ancien régime et de tout régime nouveau, monument impérial, partout et toujours non pas seulement monuments populaires, mais monuments peuple; les quatre grands dieux Termes de la gloire de Paris; l'Arc de Triomphe—un peu plus familièrement l'Étoile pour les conducteurs des Thomson, compagnie française—le monument le plus considérable qu'on ait construit en ce genre, dit le petit Larousse.

But, the King of Spain. Of course, the people were watching the soldiers pass, and there follows an apostrophe to the singular people of France, *peuple de rois, peuple roi*. . . *peuple antithétique, déjà prêt pour Hugo*. As he goes with his friend arm in arm among the crowds that watch the procession, verses of Hugo burst up to his lips. For here is the true Hugo of pomp and ceremonies and popular processions, Hugo the pacifist, "mais, comme le peuple, pacifiste de grande armée." Then, in a long passage of inimitable criticism, M. Péguy proves his case, that Hugo was the very soul of the French people, in his three-fold demand upon war. Soldiers must give processions such as they alone can give; they must afford objects of execration such as they alone can be; above all, they must

supply the inspiration that can never be found in peace. This feeling towards war culminates alike for the people and for Hugo in the attitude towards Napoleon. The French people, and Hugo with them, have abused him more than anyone, simply because they could afford to abuse him prodigally, since their admiration for him was copious enough easily to withstand every drain upon it.

But an attempt was made on the life of the King of Spain. Immediately the atmosphere changed. The charm was broken. Not the celebrations were real any more, but only the attempt. Instantly every one felt that he had a kingdom for which he was responsible. The King departed safely. The anxiety was gone. Yet, in a day, the face of the world changed, in a morning, even. The people returned to Paris, M. Péguy among them, and they learned that France was in instant peril of a German invasion.

Thus ends the *cahier*. It is a work of indubitable genius, bewildering in its sudden richness and its range of emotion, unlike any other work in the French language. Charles Péguy wrote it when he was thirty-one years of age. He was forty-one when he fell at Villeroy, on September 5, 1914.

JOHN MITCHEL.

JOHN MITCHEL. A Study in Irish Nationalism. By EMILE MONTÉGUT. (Translated by J. M. Hone. Maunsel. 1s. net.)

In that number of the "Revue des Deux Mondes" in which Baudelaire's "Les Fleurs du Mal" appeared—that is to say, about sixty years ago—there appeared also an article by Emile Montégut entitled "An Exile of Young Ireland." This was a commentary on the "Jail Journal" of John Mitchel, one of the chief figures in the Young Ireland Movement of 1848—it was naturally also an appreciation, or rather criticism, of Irish aspirations towards nationality at that time; and it is now translated, with a shrewd introduction by Mr. J. M. Hone.

Mr. Hone justly considers Montégut's analysis of the mutual grievances of England and Ireland illuminating, though it was written without personal knowledge of Ireland, but it is odd that he should find it sympathetic. The French critic sums up what seem to him the reasons of "the reciprocal hatred of the two peoples," and he certainly sees more in the Irish case than in the English to arouse the sympathy of a man of his mind; but this detached, penetrating summing-up ends in, as it were, a shrug of the shoulder, pitying perhaps and regretful, one might even say half sympathetic, but rather contemptuous. "The modern world, which only esteems what it can see and touch," he concludes, "is not grateful to Ireland for all her seductive gifts, and, in fact, this unhappy race is now but a debris, a memory of things and of times which will not return." That is the fact, he seems to say; it must be accepted. And as the Young Ireland agitators could not alter the fact and would not accept it, he finds himself out of sympathy with them. He seems hardly to be aware of his impatience, but it appears all through his acute, polished damning of Irish hopes.

The two main grounds of his criticism of the Young Ireland movement show at once how little it could appeal to a Frenchman of that day. First, it was futile: futile, in his opinion, partly because of the conclusion just quoted that the country was literally past hope, and partly because the movers did not know what form of government they wanted to establish. "One may say of the Irish that they find themselves in a false situation here below. Placed between memory and hope, the race will never conquer what it desires and it will never discover what it regrets"; there is another French shrug in that. Secondly, the revolutionaries were not democratic. "John Mitchel," says Montégut, "assuredly the most violent of the young Irishmen, is at bottom less revolutionary than the average English shopkeeper." This indeed is true; Mitchel was ready to dare anything, even the forlorn hazards of rebellion, to overturn English government in Ireland, but the Irish government that he proposed to substitute, though vague and unformulated, was at least to avoid any too liberal pandering to democracy. Mitchel, it must be remembered, years after, when he had escaped from captivity to America, became an ardent upholder of slavery, and Smith O'Brien, his fellow-leader, was a man saturated with the pride of very ancient and half-royal lineage. It is recorded that when France was surging in that year of upheaval Lamartine became the hero of the Young Irishmen, and some of them, led by O'Brien and Meager, went to Paris to wait upon him and his friends, but, though they were well received, their ardour was chilled. Lamartine was sympathetic but cool; and so, too, Montégut is sorry but cool.

Montégut's coolness towards the agitators of '48 is justified by their qualities, but his appreciation of the "Jail Journal" itself might fairly have been warmer. In 1848 Ireland was in a terrible condition from disease and starvation; and the peaceful, constitutional agitation policy bequeathed by O'Connell was growing more and more out of favour, when Mitchel provoked the Government into arresting him in order, as he thought, to demonstrate their weakness and the strength of his own party. His calculations were wrong, and he was convicted; and during his wanderings in convict ships—to Bermuda, to the Cape, to Van Diemen's Land, where he was allowed to live until his escape in 1853—he kept a diary. This Montégut pronounces a "voluminous torrent of insults"; but a modern Englishman, with the soreness of those old, miserable days healing, will be more likely to find in it, not always matter for agreement, but a stream of bitter, brilliant sarcasm, acute enough to be informing, and often an ironic good humour.

OF HUMAN BONDAGE.

OF HUMAN BONDAGE: A NOVEL. By W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM. (Heinemann. 6s.)

No lover of Fielding is likely to complain of the long, biographical form of novel which time (helped, perhaps, a little by M. Romain Rolland) has brought into favour again with the novelists. If the hero or subject of the biography is worth knowing at all, it is a good thing to know him in childhood. And it is not only the hero whom the biographical novel is to elucidate. With Fielding in mind, the reader expects that the writer shall give him also a view of life—not the suggestion that comes from a "slice," but some kind of general answer, whether the author present it "dramatically" or didactically, to the problem set by the whole cake.

Some recent experiments suggest that a capital difficulty in this form of fiction is to maintain the balance between life and the man. Life is very various and very interesting: the temptation is to keep the man too strictly to the function of a looking-glass, in which life, hurrying by, is reflected without being affected; as if personality, which means in some degree limitation and in some sense choice, went for nothing, and a man were equally susceptible to everything that crossed his field of reflection. Mr. Maugham has avoided that mistake. His Philip Carey is often pretty helpless, as man is wont to be; but he has flavour and individuality. He reacts, as chemists say, to this or that, and not equally to everything. As the book goes on Mr. Maugham wins the reader's confidence, and at the close has his full agreement. Just that, and no other, was Philip Carey—a good fellow, a fool, much to be pitied, much to be envied, worth knowing and worth learning from. Mr. Maugham takes him from a dismal childhood to a minor public school; to Heidelberg instead of to Oxford; to an office in the City; to the art schools in Paris; to a London hospital; to a draper's shop; back to the hospital, and finally to a country practice. The setting of each phase in his career is elaborated in vivid, and doubtless accurate, detail, but in each case it remains a setting for this particular man.

Philip Carey was a cripple and an orphan. He was exceptionally sensitive, and he had the kind of pride which leads sensitive people to self-torture. He was restless and eager; he had a great capacity for happiness and unhappiness; and like many young men he was so busy yearning for the moon that he never saw the sixpence at his feet. His story is the pilgrim's progress from illusion into reality, from dreaming into knowing, from gaping after the future into making the most of the present. It is the common experience, though in no two lives does it ever take the same form or the same time; and one point in Mr. Maugham's favour is that this is obviously Philip Carey's particular experience. But the effect is not gained without a little straining. We believe that to be less Mr. Maugham's fault than the fault of his day. He is not, that is, untainted with the prevailing notion that only the miserable things are worth writing about. A very great injury was worked on Philip Carey's life by his low passion for a detestable woman called Mildred. Mildred is so brilliantly drawn that the reader cannot but share the author's obvious delight in his own skill. Yet, before we have done with her, we dread the sight of her name on a page as Philip dreaded seeing her in the street. It is not only that we resent being forced to spend so much time with so unpleasant a creature. We resent the twist that is given to the figure of life. Another of Philip's love affairs was carried on with a woman called Norah. Norah was charming, and she gave Philip some happiness; therefore Norah must be kept as much as possible out of sight. There was more of true "life" in one of Philip's evenings with Norah than in all his expense of spirit in a waste of shame with Mildred; and when Norah is tucked away into a grudging chapter or two we feel that the life account is being made up unfairly, with a big sum left out on the credit side. Perhaps Mr. Maugham will adjust it by telling us in some future novel about Philip's life with the adorable Sally who becomes his wife. For love and happiness are no less "life" than lust and misery—and quite as good material for fiction, if only our novelists would see it.

The view of life which the book works out implies certainly a profounder mind than would be expected from Mr. Maugham's successful drama. He does not, like Fielding, talk to us in intimate prefaces; nor does he, like some novelists, throw the mass of facts before us and bid us make what we can of it. It is all Philip Carey's story, and Philip Carey's thoughts; but Mr. Maugham has no objection to telling us quite clearly what he is at—what Philip Carey made of it. Philip was no seer. He referred everything to his own experience. He had no faith in God and very little in man. His morals were a matter of so much of "good form" as was left over from his public school life, and of what Christian ethic survived his loss of Christian belief. On the road from illusion to reality he is robbed, one by one, of the comforts which he had not tasted by his own experience. The last to go was the desire for happiness. Life is the pattern in a Persian rug; joy and pain make up the colours. That is all. There is no meaning to the design (and there Mr. Maugham and Philip Carey and the drunken poet Crowsfoot, who suggested the idea, are all a little hard on Persian rugs, in which every figure has a symbolical meaning). But a man may at least make the design beautiful, and may accept bravely and gladly what colours come. Poets and seers see something more, or something other, in life than that. Mr. Maugham has presented, very clearly and very ably, the view of human bondage to circumstance which was conceived by the keen intelligence and eager spirit of one who was no poet.

The Current Number affords an excellent instance of the comprehensive character of *The Times History*, as giving not merely a record of the actual fighting, but also a permanent portrayal in word and picture of many remarkable aspects of civilian life during the War.

The Feeding of Belgium.

"The work of the relief and feeding of Belgium must take its place among the highest achievements compassed by the heart and mind of man."

So run the opening words of PART 51 of *The Times Illustrated HISTORY OF THE WAR* now on sale, which describes the saving of seven million Belgians from absolute starvation by the Commission of Relief presided over by Mr. H. C. Hoover—a labour "not only of generosity and self-sacrifice on the part of those who successfully performed the task, but an example of forethought, organization, effort, and resolution rarely met with."

As a contrast to the harrowing story told in Chapters XXIV. and XXV. (Vol. I.) of Belgium's Agony under her brutal invaders, this plain recital of the kindly offices of a group of neutrals—mostly American citizens—will be read with feelings of grateful relief.

The latter portion of this interesting 51st Weekly Part is occupied with a very informative chapter dealing with the influx of Belgian Refugees into this country, and the measures taken to provide for their support and employment during their sojourn here.

Forty-six photographs of uncommon interest enhance the value of this Number. That of the huge dormitory at the Alexandra Palace is quite unique.

51st

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39. Gerald Gould, review, *New Statesman*

V, 25 September 1915, 594

Gerald Gould (1885-1936) was a poet, critic and journalist. After the Great War he became chief fiction reviewer on the *Observer* and also a reader for Victor Gollancz, thus having considerable influence over the fortunes of contemporary British fiction.

The following review dealt also with a novel by Mrs Henry Dudeney.

Mr Maugham has produced a very big book in every sense of the word. It has six hundred and forty-eight pages and as many merits. Only—and the effect is odd—the merits are not precisely those which one would expect from Mr Maugham. He has shown himself in the past capable of finished construction and sparkling verbal wit: here he gives us neither the one nor the other. The succession of incidents is almost wantonly casual (so, he might say, is the succession of incidents in life). The conversations and descriptions are often amazingly vivid, but seldom amusing: several characters are introduced who, we are given to understand, talk brilliantly, but Mr Maugham does not allow them to talk in the least brilliantly. There is minuteness without realism, passion

without romance, variation without variety: one might say that Mr Maugham's line is length without breadth. There is a fury of concentration in every detail of what is by superficial tests so diffuse. The limitations are clearly not due to any defect of power: they are deliberate. They are an essay in the admirable artistic thesis that the part is greater than the whole. Life is constrained by them to suit a point of view. This method, of disguising selectiveness by profusion, of making life conceal art, is not new, but it has not often been practised in England. If Mr Maugham belongs to a school at all, it is to a French one. But I am not sure that he does belong to a school. I am not sure he has not written a highly original book. I am not even sure he has not written almost a great one.

Philip Carey has a club foot, and a profound sensitiveness about it. His whole character is modified by it; but, even apart from that, he looks at facts from a peculiar angle. His childhood and school days make one conscious of his queerness, his intensity—of the extent to which his friendships, his decisions, his mode of life, are affected by resentment and the passion of self-pitying pride. After school, he has a career of exceptional diversity. It takes one to Germany, to a London office, to Paris (the Quarter, the art students' life), and back to a London hospital. Philip is everything by starts and nothing (until he finally qualifies as a medical man) long. Even the hospital period contains a break during which, having lost all his money, he is reduced to earning his living as a shop assistant: more variation, more local colour! The amount of difference and detail in the book is incredible—it would furnish the settings for a dozen or so ordinary novels. It is obvious that we can give no idea of it by quotation. But, perhaps, this picture of the Bal Bullier is as typical as anything:

It was a sordid scene . . . They danced furiously. They danced round the room, slowly, talking very little, with all their attention given to the dance. The room was hot, and their faces shone with sweat. It seemed to Philip that they had thrown off the guard which people wear on their expression, the homage to convention, and he saw them now as they really were. In that moment of abandon they were strangely animal: some were foxy and some were wolflike; and others had the long, foolish face of sheep. Their skins were sallow from the unhealthy life they led, and the poor food they ate. Their features were blunted by mean interests, and their little eyes were shifty and cunning. There was nothing of nobility in

their bearing, and you felt that for all of them life was a long succession of petty concerns and sordid thoughts. The air was heavy with the musty smell of humanity. But they danced furiously as though impelled by some strange power within them, and it seemed to Philip that they were driven forward by a rage for enjoyment. . . . They were hurried on by a great wind, helplessly, they knew not why and they knew not whither. Fate seemed to tower above them, and they danced as though everlasting darkness were beneath their feet. Their silence was vaguely alarming. It was as if life terrified them and robbed them of power of speech so that the shriek which was in their hearts died at their throats. Their eyes were haggard and grim; and notwithstanding the beastly lust that disfigured them, and the meanness of their faces, and the cruelty, notwithstanding the stupidity which was worst of all, the anguish of those fixed eyes made all that crowd terrible and pathetic.

Now I venture to say flatly that anyone who knows the Bullier will deny the truth of this picture. There is much true gaiety there, and a love of pleasure which, so far from being terrible, is quite simple and natural—the ordinary excitement of youth. Nevertheless, the picture is true as seen through Philip's eyes: it has the truth of the angle. And that brings me to the main point. The interest of the story is chiefly sexual. You cannot have love without sex, but when he is scarcely more than a boy Philip has an 'experience' with a pitiful and unpleasant woman much older than himself: when he is in Paris he is loved, unreciprocally, by a far more pitiful and unpleasant woman—a queer, passionate, ugly, vengeful, disagreeable creature, absolutely unforgettable, whom it wrings one's heart to read of. The best years of his life are wasted on an abnormal physical craving for a vulgar, empty-headed girl, alternately cold and lustful and always treacherous, whose physical defects—her greenish complexion, her anaemic lips, her flat chest—are dwelt upon insistently. For this girl he makes the extremest sacrifices, undergoes the most horrible humiliations, and with it all succeeds neither in satisfying himself nor in keeping her off the streets. He has, in an interval, an affair with a really charming, if ugly, woman: but even there there is none of the fine quality of permanence. He finds peace and the prospect of a simple, homely, satisfactory life—a rest from his morbidities—in marrying a child of nature, a girl of clear visions and calm moods, magnificently healthy; but even with her he approaches marriage only by what is, after all, the unusual road of seduction. Of this whole view of sex, the romantic (who is the

best realist) will say, as of the view of the Bullier quoted above—'It simply isn't like that.' And yet it is so far-fetched that from that very fact it draws a certain convincingness. It may be true—from the angle. But what an angle! And still I am misrepresenting Mr Maugham. I have made his book sound revolting, and it is not. Many things in it are painful, but the philosophy informing it has so much tenderness, patience, endurance, that the total effect is not revolting and not hopeless: the whole is exceedingly strange, but it is on the grand scale, and in some ways beautiful. . . .

40. Unsigned review, *Athenaeum*

4582, 21 August 1915

To-day, when so many are teaching us tersely enough how to live and to die, it requires some little patience to wade through over five hundred pages describing the process as leisurely and none too adequately carried out by a member of the male sex in the Victorian era. The hero of Mr Maugham's novel was hampered by a concatenation of disadvantages. Many have suffered from the early loss of parents and guardianship assumed by a person who ought not to have had the upbringing of a dog, far less a human being, but the added defect of a club foot from birth is happily unusual. In other words, the author has so handicapped his hero as to remove him out of the category of the average. This, however, is largely a record of sordid realism.

Until he reached manhood the hero had never experienced anything which could be designated by the name of love except from the wife of his guardian, and she was really nothing but a shrivelled old maid. None the less we regret her death before the middle of the book as she is the most sympathetically drawn of all the characters. As a matter of fact the author's women are all in our opinion better drawn than his men. Even the selfish A. B. C. girl, whom the hero could not succeed in making one of his mistresses, has many redeeming qualities, but we find none in the man

himself. The other subjects of his amours are very real, not least in their inconsistency in caring for him.

We learn a good deal concerning the three careers which he tried—accountancy, painting, and doctoring—but none of these was adopted from anything approaching a real motive. The picture of the kindly humanity of the one family that gave him a welcome in his medical student days affords a welcome relief. We would gladly have dispensed with much else to hear more of the head of it. The discussions concerning art and morality which take place in the Latin quarter are somewhat discounted by the principal talker, who, after holding his audience entranced by verbal fireworks, declares himself to be very drunk. The values accorded by the hero to love, realism, and religion are so distorted as to have no interest beyond that which belongs to an essentially morbid personality. In such a long novel reiteration is peculiarly tiresome and apt to reduce the gratitude which should be felt for the detailed portraiture and varied aspects of life the author presents to us.

41. Theodore Dreiser, 'As a Realist Sees It', *New Republic*

V, 25 December 1915, 202-4

Theodore Herman Albert Dreiser (1871-1945) was an American novelist who began his career as a journalist. One of the pioneers of realism in the American novel, influenced by Balzac, his novels include *The Financier* (1912), *Sister Carrie* (1900) and *An American Tragedy* (1925).

From the publication of this effusive, emphatic review Maugham dated the start of the novel's journey towards becoming a modern classic.

Sometimes in retrospect of a great book the mind falters, confused by the multitude and yet the harmony of the detail, the strangeness

of the frettings, the brooding, musing, intelligence that has foreseen, loved, created, elaborated, perfected, until, in this middle ground, which we call life, somewhere between nothing and nothing, hangs the perfect thing which we love and cannot understand, but which we are compelled to confess a work of art. It is at once something and nothing, a dream, a happy memory, a song, a benediction. In viewing it, one finds nothing to criticize or to regret. The thing sings, it has colour. It has rapture. You wonder at the loving, patient care which has evolved it.

Only recently I finished reading Mr W. Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*. It was with some such feeling as this that I laid it down. In recent years, and quite definitely, we have been getting on in a literary way. Despite our complaints as to the intolerance of a philistine age, many interesting things are being done. In England, particularly in the last few years (though France has produced *Jean Christophe*), we have had George Moore, all of him; *The New Machiavelli* of Wells, *Fortitude* by Hugh Walpole; *The Old Wives' Tale* by Arnold Bennett, *Sinister Street* by Compton Mackenzie, *The New Grub Street* by Gissing, *Joseph Stahl* by J.D. Beresford, and also such minor volumes as *The Rat Pit* by Patrick MacGill, and *Mushroom Town* by Oliver Onions. (What a name!) In America, on the other hand, we have lagged. There have been *Predetermined* by Stephen French Whitman, *Quicksand* by Hervey White, *The Story of Eva* by Will Payne, *The Turn of the Balance* by Brand Whitlock, *With the Procession* by H.B. Fuller and *McTeague* by Frank Norris, but all of these, transcendent as are their narrative merits, are lacking somehow in the vast undercurrent of which these newer and more forceful writers seem cognizant.

Here is a novel or biography or autobiography or social transcript of the utmost importance. To begin with, it is unmoral, as a novel of this kind must necessarily be.

[There follows an outline of the novel's plot.]

Curiously, the story rises to no spired climax. To some it has apparently appealed as a drab, unrelieved narrative. To me at least it is a gorgeous weave, as interesting and valuable at the beginning as at the end. There is material in its three hundred thousand and more words for many novels and, indeed, several philosophies, and even a religion or stoic hope. There are a series of women, of course—drab, pathetic, enticing, as the case may be—who lead

him through the mazes of sentiment, sex, love, pity, passion, a wonderful series of portraits and of incidents. There are a series of men friends of a peculiarly inclusive range of intellectuality and taste, who lead him, or whom he leads, through all the intricacies of art, philosophy, criticism, humour. And lastly comes life itself, the great land and sea of people, England, Germany, France, battering, corroding, illuminating, a Goyaesque world.

Naturally I asked myself how such a book would be received in America, in England. In the latter country, I was sure, with its traditions of the *Athenaeum* and the *Saturday Review*, it would be adequately appreciated. Imagine my surprise to find that the English reviews were almost uniformly contemptuous and critical on moral and social grounds. The hero was a weakling, not for a moment to be tolerated by sound, right-thinking men. On the other hand, in America the reviewers for the most part have seen its true merits and stated them. Need I say, however, that the *New York World* finds it 'the sentimental servitude-of-a-poor fool'; or that the Philadelphia *Press* sees fit to dub it 'futile Philip'; or that the *Outlook* feels that 'the author might have made his book true without making it so frequently distasteful'; or that the *Dial* cries, 'a most depressing impression of the futility of life'; 'No brilliancy of style', mourns the *Detroit Times*. 'Young folks are warned off', urges the *Portland Oregonian*. (As if that young person could be induced to examine so profound and philosophic a book!) 'Certainly the story cannot be said to be in any sense a wholesome one, and it would require a distinctly morbid taste for one to enjoy it thoroughly'. (Note the 'thoroughly'.) This from the *New Orleans Time-Picayune*. 'One longs after reading these novels where spineless men and women yield without a struggle to the forces of evil—but I cannot go on. It is too trite. You must judge for yourself how the reviewer on the *Saturday Evening Post* of Burlington, Ia., felt about it.

Despite these dissonant voices, it is still a book of the utmost import, and has so been received. Compact of the experiences, the dreams, the hopes, the fears, the disillusionments, the ruptures, and the philosophisings of a strangely starved soul, it is a beacon light by which the wanderer may be guided. Nothing is left out; the author writes as though it were a labour of love. It bears the imprint of an eager, almost consuming desire to say truly what is in his heart.

Personally I found myself aching with pain when, yearning for sympathy, Philip begs the wretched Mildred, never his mistress but on his level, to no more than tolerate him. He finally humiliates himself to the extent of exclaiming: 'You don't know what it means to be a cripple!' The pathos of it plumbs the depths. The death of Fanny Price, of the sixteen-year-old mother in the slum, of Cronshaw, and the rambling agonies of old Ducroz and of Philip himself, are perfect in their appeal.

There are many other and all equally brilliant pictures. No one short of a genius could rout the philosophers from their lairs and label them as individuals 'tempering life with rules agreeable to themselves', or could follow Mildred Rogers, waitress of the London ABC restaurant, through all the shabby windings of her tawdry soul. No other than a genius endowed with an immense capacity for understanding and pity could have sympathized with Fanny Price, with her futile and self-destructive art dreams; or old Cronshaw, the wastrel of poetry and philosophy; or Mons. Ducroz, the worn-out revolutionary; or Thorne Athelny, the caged grandee of Spain; or Leonard Upjohn, airy master of the art of self-advancement; or Dr South, the vicar of Blackstable, and his wife—these are masterpieces. They are marvellous portraits; they are as smooth as a Vermeer, as definite as a Hals, as brooding and moving as a Rembrandt. The study of Carey himself, while one sees him more as a medium through which the others express themselves, still registers photographically at times. He is by no means a brooding voice but a definite, active, vigorous character.

If the book can be said to have a fault, it will lie for some in its length, 300,000 words, or for others in the peculiar reticence with which the last love affair in the story is handled. Until the coming of Sally Athelny all has been described with the utmost frankness. No situation, however crude or embarrassing, has been shirked. In the matter of the process by which he arrived at the intimacy which resulted in her becoming pregnant not a word is said. All at once, by a slight frown, which she subsequently explains, the truth is forced upon you that there has been a series of intimacies which have not been accounted for. After Mildred Rogers and his relationship with Norah Nesbit, it strikes one as strange.

I feel about this book, as I look back on it now, much as old Cronshaw in the story felt about the rug which was to clarify for Carey the meaning of life:

As the weaver elaborated his pattern for no end but the pleasure of his aesthetic sense, so might a man live his life, or, if he was forced to believe that his actions were outside his choosing, so might a man look at his life, that it made a pattern. There was little need to do this or there was little need to do that. It was merely something that he did for his own pleasure. Out of the manifold events of his life, his deeds, his feelings, his thoughts, he might make a design, regular, elaborated, complicated or beautiful; and though it might be no more than an illusion that he had the power of selection, that did not matter; it seemed and so to him it was. In the vast warp of life, with the background to his fancies that there was no meaning and that nothing was important, a man might get a personal satisfaction in selecting the various strands that worked out the pattern. . . . What happened to him now would be one more motive to add to the complexity of the pattern, and when the end approached he would rejoice in its completion. It would be a work of art and it would be none the less beautiful because he alone knew of its existence, and with his death it would at once cease to be.

And so it is, Mr Maugham, this life of Philip Carey as you have woven it. One feels as though one were sitting before a splendid Shiraz or Daghestan of priceless texture and intricate weave, admiring, feeling, responding sensually to its colours and tones. Or better yet, it is as though a symphony of great beauty by a master, Strauss and Beethoven, has just been completed, and the bud notes and flower tones were filling the air with their elusive message, fluttering and dying. Mr Maugham, as I understand it, has written eleven conventional books and as many plays. It may be that for years, as the paragraph quoted suggests, he has lived willing that the large knowledge which this book reveals should remain unseen and even perish with him. For all of that he is none the less a great artist. Vicariously, it seems to me, he has suffered for the joy of the many who are to read after him. By no willing of his own he has been compelled to take life by the band and go down where there has been little save sorrow and degradation. The cup of gall and wormwood has obviously been lifted to his lips and to the last drop he has been compelled to drink it. Because of this we are enabled to see the rug, woven of the tortures and the delights of a life. We may actually walk and talk with one whose hands and feet have been pierced with nails.

42. Marcus Aurelius Goodrich, 'After Ten Years of Of Human Bondage', New York Times

25 January 1925, 2

Marcus Aurelius Goodrich (b. 1897) was a journalist, screen-writer and novelist. His novel *Delilah* (1941) was based on his experience of naval warfare in the Great War.

During the last decade, the vast, passive jury, in whose hands rests the fate of all writing aspiring to a berth among the classics, have been attending in ever increasing numbers to the steady, un-acclaimed arcing [sic] over the turmoil of William Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*. Among New York's literary guild the quite long book, no doubt, has been forgotten. Experiment has shown that when it is possible for a moment to shunt the attention of most of that eminent crew from the uproarious business of literature to the name Maugham, the inevitable response is an exhibitionistic shout referring to a play that he did not write, or to another novel about a tired English business man who retreated to life among the blue skies and corals with a leprosy ridden negress.

But in the less spectacular realms of those who read books merely because they like to read, or those whose culture shelters a vibrant attraction towards authentic performances in English prose, or those who are thrilled to find the universal aspects of life on a printed page, *Of Human Bondage* has, after ten years of steadily increasing activity, risen in England almost to a place beside *The Way of All Flesh*, and in the United States is on the way to becoming an uncanonical sensation. When the book was first published in the United States, it managed to live through three anaemic editions, despite the general critical preoccupation with other matters. Then four years went by and the publishers suddenly discovered that there was a quiet, unheralded demand for

more copies of *Of Human Bondage*. They issued another small edition. Two years later, without a single pat on the back from the literators, the supply was again exhausted. The publishers prepared another edition. In 1923 the steady demand for the novel assumed such proportions that it was introduced into a special edition of works that seem to be in permanent demand. In this last edition, which is a fixture of its publishing house, it has gone through three printings. The universities just seem to have discovered the novel, libraries report an increasing call for it, second-hand book dealers number it among the old novels that still sell easily, and the price in London of a first edition of it has multiplied itself by three in the past five years. In New York's clubs and drawing rooms and at exotic dinner tables, one is a bit surprised to find so old a book talked of as if it had been written yesterday, surprised that any volume could have resisted for so long the gigantic flood rushing every second from the printing presses. The explanation, perhaps, is that *Of Human Bondage* has become a classic.

A short time after Heinemann in England and Doran in the United States simultaneously published *Of Human Bondage* in 1915, the perfunctory, unenergetic ripple that it had caused in the critical puddle had smoothed out. The book was allowed to go unpublished on its quiet way down the trail to oblivion, while the critics turned to rattle themselves in more spectacular rouge pots. In England the critics evidently had felt that something was expected of them, but most of them just did not seem to be very much interested. They admitted generally that it was a realistic character study. Richard King in the *Tatler*, as was to be expected, dismissed it facetiously in a short commentary that ended with the information that *Of Human Bondage* is scarcely a story. The *Westminster Gazette* decorously passed on the word that it had 'excellence'; the *Saturday Review* admitted that it was 'arresting'; the *Nation*, in a flabby article, pronounced it to be an experimental attempt to follow in the steps of Compton Mackenzie; and *Punch* inquired plaintively, 'Why have so many of our novelists taken to producing enormous volumes marked by a pre-Raphaelite fidelity to detail?'

In the United States the case was pretty much the same. The *New York World* in four careless little unsigned paragraphs intimated that the novel was not worth all the space it took up and complained

of the title. *Harper's Weekly* printed: '*Of Human Bondage* is a fat, comfortable volume that will hold the attention of all those who read fiction seriously.' The *Dial* commented sententiously on its length and said that 'the book is far from being compellingly great.' The *Outlook* devoted a few lines to the opinion that the book 'shows marked ability in its own way.' Most of the papers throughout the States contented themselves with minor, routine observations that the book was 'startlingly realistic,' and with excerpted paragraphs let it go at that. In several journals appeared the same, mild, stereotyped review that had probably emanated from some syndicate; but what might be held up as the symbol of the whole critical attitude, both here and in England, leaked off the pen of the critic on the *Pittsburgh Chronicle-Telegraph*:

The reviewer has looked at this book time and again, and just as often has refrained from looking into it. The reason is that there are 648 pages of the story—300 pages too many for careful reading and candid review. But this much can be said: It opens with a funeral and ends with a wedding. As the author is one of the most successful of the younger dramatists, and is said to have made several fortunes from his plays, it may be taken for granted that his novel will repay the reading of it by those who have the time to do so.

Both abroad and in the United States, however, there were some who were fired into eloquent approval of Mr Maugham's novel. The journals in Dublin, Ireland; Los Angeles, Cal., and Chicago, Ill.; the *Boston Evening Transcript* and Theodore Dreiser in the *New Republic* came out flatly with the news that a great and thrilling masterpiece had been born into the world.

When Mr Maugham, after fashioning a monument of such stoical brilliance as *Of Human Bondage* unmolested by overmuch critical booming, went down among the critics and burst out in their midst with *The Moon and Sixpence*, his fleshy, vivid gesture was not, perhaps, so much a normal literary development, as it was a comment on the middlemen who stood between him and promptly rewarded literary achievement.

After coming face to face with the universal, simple beauty and verity that rears itself symmetrically through the 648 pages of Maugham's book, one realizes that he confronts a tremendous emotional, not merely sensual, upheaval. He has seen life, if not defined, at least epically epitomized.

That *Of Human Bondage* suffered tardy intellectual approval, may be due to the gaudy critical methods that began to come into vogue about the time Mr Maugham started writing. The chief impetus behind these methods seems to be, as somebody has pointed out, an intent on the part of the critic to call attention to himself rather than to the work he is criticizing. A book received the spotlight if it were capable of reflecting sensational and startling colors back upon him who directed the light. There are in Maugham's novel no color splashing areas nor purpleal periods that could be used to decorate the sort of spectacular critiques inspired, for instance, by the efforts of Messrs. Huxley, Hergesheimer and Firbank. But *Of Human Bondage* is built with pure, meagre-syllabled phrases that twist and cling thrillingly in their unsensational contexts. It is only when the simple, almost primitive, words sum up into the whole absorbing performance that they partake of the nature of sensation. Without once relapsing into dullness, Maugham has consistently passed by the opportunity to indulge in poster effects, so that in the end he might attain to a vital sweep of living, effulgent, integral color. He has succeeded. Even in those passages wherein he depicts events and situations than which there are no more spectacular in man's existence, he maintains his Homeric restraint to an extent that almost makes them seem flat when extracted from their contexts....



Orderly Officer. "TURN OUT THE GUARD!"

Sentry (formerly in commerce). "SHOP!"

OUR BOOKING-OFFICE.

(By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks.)

MRS. HENRY DUDENEY is one of the few women writers to-day who possess what could be called the large manner. Her new book, *The Secret Son* (METHUEN), is a good example of this—a homely tale of rustic happenings touched with a real sense of tragedy. A Sussex downland farm is the scene of it, and something of this country of wide spaces seems to have got into the treatment, so that while the story is for the most part unhappy it is never morbid. It must be confessed that some antiseptic influence of the kind is needed. Of the four women who make any considerable appearance in the action, one is half-witted, and the other three have all, as the melodramas say, taken the wrong turning. Which seems "above the average that statistics have laid down for our guidance"; at least, one would prefer to think so. The virtue of the book lies partly in the character of *Nancy* and in the handling of her love for *Morris*, who was the son, not of her proper husband, but of the consumptive squire, *Chinnery*. Then, when in his turn *Morris* falls in love, the woman whom he is about to marry has to make to him a confession of the same flaw; and *Nancy*, who has never dared tell the truth of his own origin to the son whom she adores, must look on and see him suffer. Nor is this all; in yet a third generation the same misery comes, till, as *Morris* says to his mother, it all threatens to "happen over again like a giddy go round." Mrs. DUDENEY's picture of country life is not exactly a pretty one; but she deserves the more credit for having brought out the beauty and humanity of it, as well as the horror. There is plenty of

the last in the scene where *Chinnery's* half-lunatic wife and the peasant-woman whom he really loved meet over his death-bed. In short, a moving and in many ways a beautiful story, but one to be prescribed with caution.

Why have so many of our novelists taken to producing enormous volumes marked by a pre-Raphaelite fidelity to detail? The latest convert is Mr. W. S. MAUGHAM, whose usual manner I seem to recall as rather impressionistic. But in his new novel, *Of Human Bondage* (HEINEMANN), he is, so to speak, as *Jean Christophy* as the best of them. This is the kind of book that tells you in six hundred and fifty pages all you want to know about a group of characters, and a great deal more. It is a method that resembles the historic little girl: when it is good it is very, very good, and when it is not it is horridly boring. Mr. MAUGHAM's case is not quite so bad as that; but though his book manages to be quite wonderfully good in parts, it yet leaves a general impression of boredom. The trouble is that the central character, whose career as school-boy, art-student, doctor, shop-walker, and the rest of it, we are compelled to follow so closely, never inspires enough personal interest to make the labour one of love. Indeed, it seems hardly in order to speak of the two protagonists as hero and heroine; *Philip* remains to the last nebulous and uninteresting, while *Mildred* is real enough certainly, but so entirely detestable that we are impatient to be rid of her society. Fortunately there are other characters in a crowded canvas that make up for these. *Miss Price*, for example, the bitter-souled little student, starving in Paris on a faith in her own utterly imaginary genius, is one of the most haunting and tragic figures that I have met with in recent

sition. To balance her we have another and very different portrait in *Philip's* aunt, small, tremulous *Mrs. Carey*, with her pathetic love for a boorish husband and an unresponsive nephew. For these two women alone the book was worth writing. If only there was not quite so much of it!

The eponymous hero of *Edwards*, by Mr. BARRY PAIN (WERNER LAURIE), is a gentleman who, having drawn the suburbs blank, settles in London as a jobbing gardener and proceeds to defraud humanity—or rather such portions of humanity as are ill-advised enough to employ his time, of which he cheats them, and his energies, which he reserves for the beer-bottle and the tap-room. *Edwards* in his jobbing way is as great a rogue as *Barry Lyndon*, and what THACKERAY did for *Lyndon* Mr. BARRY PAIN here does for *Edwards*. He allows him to describe himself and his rogueries with the most perfect frankness and in the regretful spirit of one who, in spite of occasional successes, has on the whole come off second best in his struggles against the harshness and cruelty of a censorious world. *Edwards* is a shrewd commentator on his own foibles, which he admires, and the foibles of others, which he despises even while he profits by them. He describes the stages of the gardening fever to which ladies are liable. "There was one garden I used to look after up Hampstead way. At first it was all peace and quietness there. Nobody ever came into the garden except me and the cats . . . If you managed to mow a lawn which were about six yards square in an eight hours' day that was all that was expected, and the lady would ask you if you weren't tired when you left, and not mean it in a nasty way either." Then came the fever, and the lady wanted daffodils and told *Edwards*

to get a packet of the seed and sow it at once. Finally, "she give me a shilling and I got a nice sixpenny pot of daffodils with it for the trade price of fourpence." Then the lady bartered her husband's new suit of clothes for fuchsias, and so on till she ordered *Edwards* to take up the lawn, put in proper drainage and relay it. Of course he couldn't stand this, so he left, and his employer lost a treasure of drink and incompetence. Everybody will be glad to learn that the marriage of *Edwards* did not make him happy. Too much seemed to be expected of him. Mr. BARRY PAIN knows a great deal about gardeners. Can he tell me why a gardener, though he always goes about his duties without a coat, invariably retains his waistcoat, even in the hottest weather. Is the waistcoat a gardening fetish?

In *The German Peril* (UNWIN), Mr. FREDERIC HARRISON reprints, with comments to date, his chief utterances on the German menace from 1863 onwards, and they make an instructive if somewhat too obviously self-regarding document. As Mr. HARRISON has a short sharp way of dealing with those who venture to differ from him, labelling them "sanctimonious purists," "snivelling journalists," or bab-

blers of "idiotic drivel," a reviewer is fairly warned beforehand. Perhaps one's chief feeling is that our author was so substantially right in his pleadings and prophecies (he knew his history and he knew his Hun) that he might deal a little less vehemently with his opponents; might perhaps have remembered that to be right on main issues is not equivalent to a patent of infallibility on all detail. In the controversy of the submarine crews, for instance, in which he was the chief advocate of the reprisals-for-piracy theory, he certainly forgot that it was little use attempting to deal with such matters till we were in a position to deal effectively. And anyway how were these feats of the submarine, even the crowning infamy of the *Lusitania*, a whit worse than several of the more devilish outrages in Belgium and France? Meanwhile Mr. HARRISON's eloquence helps us to remember—no useless function, for the mind has so surfeited on the recital of horrors that the spirit has become a little insensitive to their significance. If we must recruit

by advertisement, I'd sooner see real extracts, not polite summaries, from the Belgian and French Reports than the ingenious sophistries of the War Office experts. We certainly ought to have listened to Mr. HARRISON, who was no filibustering jingo. But we believed what we wished to believe, and our blindness is only just a little excused because we trusted certain of our leaders and our pundits.

The hero of *Betty Wayside* (HODDER AND STOUGHTON) was a composer of genius; the heroine played the piano like an angel; the major villain was a baritone; and another man, who had the makings of a scamp, played the flute. So it was music, music all the way. But fresh evidence is given here that to be in love with a musical genius is not exactly to lie on a bed of roses. When,

however, I remember that *Walter Chippendale* walked sometimes as if he was "possessed of devils," I am bound to admit that he was not anything like so uncomfortable a lover as he sounds. Indeed, I found his courtship of *Betty* far more tolerable than the intrigues of a bevy of youths and maidens whose many affairs of the heart strained my patience to breaking point. The scenes of this book are laid in Sydney, and when the author—whose name, LOUIS STONE, is unknown to me—has learned not to overcrowd her stage all should be easy sailing for her. She has a real love of music, and more than a little knowledge of those wonderful (but slightly disturbing) people to whom music is an absorbing passion.

The Sea Lion's Whelp.

"The Turkish battleship *Hair-ed-Din* was sunk by a British submarine."—*Birmingham Daily Post*.

"His rendering of 'The Little Grey Home in the West' is charming, and many people are really raving about it. be lulodar ad ah trah ar th art htr."—*South Pacific Mail*.

Even the printer, you will observe, was affected.



Customer (with impediment). "I WANT A C-C-CLOCK."
 Shopkeeper. "SORRY, SIR; WE DON'T STOCK CUCKOO CLOCKS."
 Customer. "BUT I DON'T WANT A C-C-CUC-K-K-OO C-C-CLOCK.
 I ONLY WANT A C-C-CLOCK."

UNDER COSSACK AND BOLSHIEVIK.

UNDER COSSACK AND BOLSHIEVIK (Methuen, 7s. net.) is an extremely vivid and interesting account of certain phases of the Russian Revolution from the pen of an eyewitness, Miss Rhoda Power, who at the time of the outbreak was governess to a Russian family at Rostov-on-the-Don. One would like to know how far this family, of the rich bourgeois type, was representative of its class. If there were many others like it, the appalling violence and bloodiness of the Revolution cease to be matter for wonder, for such a picture of sloth, ostentation, and frivolity fairly makes one's gorge rise. They lived daily on the most luxurious fare, whilst outside the poor waited by hundreds in a queue for a loaf of black bread, which often was not forthcoming; they could not even give themselves a bath without the help of lackeys and attendants, to whom their demeanour was callous and exacting in the extreme; in the time of danger they simply disappeared, leaving their governesses and dependents to the mercy of the murderous brigands who were the real masters of the town; to the end they thought of nothing but the recovery of their lost comfort, now hoping undisguisedly for a German occupation, now peevishly complaining that the Allies had not sent an Army to restore order and give them back their cakes and their chocolates. The manhood of Rostov crowded to the cinemas, whilst the Junkers and Cadets, a forlorn handful, many of them boys of fourteen and fifteen, went forth to be slaughtered by the victorious Red Armies.

Miss Power shows us very clearly that the hope of Russia's salvation by the Cossacks was from the first illusory. Rostov is, of course, in the Don Cossack country, of which Novocherkassk (which figures a good deal in these pages) is the capital. It was occupied in due course by Kaledin, and there were high hopes of an orderly and independent Republican Government; for although the Bolsheviks had won the elections, the actual power was at the time held by Kaledin, who placed the town under martial law. But he could no longer rely on his Army. It was undermined by the Bolshevik spirit; at the time of the earlier victory it was known that many of the younger Cossacks had refused to fight against the Bolsheviks; and before long his loyal forces, overwhelmed by numbers, had to retreat continually, dispersing as they did so, until the last worn-out remnant passed backward through Rostov. Kaledin committed suicide, and the victory of the Reds was complete. Then came the usual Bolshevik régime, with its normal programme of abominations. Two unfamiliar aspects of it should be emphasized. The first is, that it was, *inter alia*, directed avowedly against education; the hand of the Bolshevik was not only against those richer than himself and more powerful than himself, but against those better educated than himself, just because they were better educated. The second is that the wholesale plunder was not sanctioned by the Bolshevik officials; we are assured that they shot convicted thieves and promised help to anyone who would telephone to headquarters. Unfortunately, as the authoress points out, it is difficult to telephone when a burly ruffian is sitting, revolver in hand, on your chest, while another goes through your pockets. Still, we can at least credit them with a pious aspiration.

The authoress preserved her sense of humour throughout these horrors in the most amazing way. Space forbids much quotation, but one cannot forbear mention of the peasant who thought that Annexation and Indemnity were two frontier towns that Russia would have to give up to Germany; while as a specimen of the grimmer kind of humour, the following notice boarded on a train is about the most exquisite we have seen:—"Will the tovarishchi (comrades) kindly refrain from throwing passengers on to the lines while the train is in motion, as it creates a bad impression abroad." The italics are ours.

RAEMAEKERS'S CARTOON HISTORY.

There are many histories of the war, and there will be very many more in the centuries to come; but among them all RAEMAEKERS'S CARTOON HISTORY OF THE WAR (Lane, 10s. 6d. net.) will be unique. Those who have studied M. Raemaekers's cartoons know that his industry has been unflagging; but Mr. Murray Allison's compilation helps us to realize that in the Dutch artist's cartoons we have a practically complete pictorial history of the war, which it is possible to arrange in fairly exact chronological sequence. Mr. Allison's preface narrates how M. Raemaekers began at the very beginning. On July 31, 1914, he was:—

A quiet gentleman, the son of a country editor, happy in his family, devout, contemplative, loving beauty and peace, contentedly painting the good and lovely things he saw among the tulip-fields and waterways, the cattle, and the windmills of his own native Holland.

On the following day he was a flaming brand of fate. For on that day he published in the *Amsterdam Telegraaf* his first cartoon, "Christendom after Twenty Centuries." It was not the Germans whom he attacked in that cartoon, for the Germans had not yet declared their notion of war, but war itself. Very soon the attack found its direction. The Belgian atrocities started immediately on the invasion of Belgium; and the Belgian atrocities awoke in M. Raemaekers the slumbering genius. He had found his work in life. It was to pursue with relentless rage, but at the same time with imperturbable justice the devils of cruelty and greed and lies. He looked Moloch and Belial and Mammon in the face and portrayed them again and again for all the world—and for themselves—to

escaped them.

The time was to come when he took on a new note, and turned to heartening the friends of truth for the warfare against the powers of darkness. But the 100 full-page cartoons, which make up this first volume, take the story only as far as the end of the first twelve months of the war. The atrocities in Belgium, the earlier atrocities at sea, the first German defeats, and the joining of Italy in the struggle are its historical content; and a few pages are spared for those withering jests at timorous neutrals which made M. Raemaekers as little liked by some of his own countrymen as he was by the Germans.

Of the cartoons themselves there is little need to speak now. They are too well-known to demand comment. But a word must be said for the skill in arrangement and in illustration from documentary evidence which Mr. Allison has shown in editing the volume; and for the eloquent preface in which he sketches the coming and progress of M. Raemaekers and gives details of his industry and his fame.

THE NEW ELIZABETHANS.

By all means let us now praise famous men and gallant men, but, by all that was precious in their sacrifice, let us praise them as they would have wished to be praised—with dignity, with gravity, as an act of piety. That is the first feeling of a soldier on reading Mr. E. B. Osborn's *THE NEW ELIZABETHANS* (Lane, 16s. net.). It may be picturesque and permissible to call these young men of great promise—Charles Lister, Julian Grenfell and his brother, Donald Hankey, Thomas Kettle, and the rest—the New Elizabethans, but what is gained by gushing about them in a prose that is poles apart from the Elizabethan style? How they would have revolted against this treatment, with its false sentiment and its posturing smartness of phrase! Let us imagine the following passages read aloud in the presence of the heroes whom Mr. Osborn celebrates. "Middle age," he says, "has always been a blunder."

Yet these generous creatures, our own and other people's sons, are so valiant in their forgiveness of it that they most willingly die lest our poor residue of years should be embittered. They resign their bright young lives to us as Sidney gave up the cup of keen cold water.

Brayed in war's mortar, their spirit is yet unbroken and rings clear.

His mother's (Lady Desborough's) secret and sacred book of memories is full of such piercing oxymora which those who read it in the far future will but dimly apprehend.

In France or Germany young men of the calibre of Charles Lister or Raymond Asquith are not allowed to descend into the trenches and be lost in the mass of indistinguishable cannon fodder.

Imagine the look of horror in their eyes, the rush of blood to their cheeks, the uproarious laugh of Charles Lister, who had the trick of this manner at his finger ends and would have read these passages inimitably in his drawing voice. It would have delighted them—would it not?—that, after their death in action, they should be neatly ticketed in a collection of short memoirs, this one as the "joyous critic," that one as "the man about town," another as "an Oxford Cavalier," and that all kinds of irrelevant details, with ecstatic comments, of their early lives should be displayed by an ingenious compiler, because in the height of their promise they had the honour of dying for their country.

There is a great difference between this kind of writing and those moving pages wherein mourning parents and wives or life-long intimates have revealed something of that which made the lost one so precious. Mr. Edward Marsh's memoir of Rupert Brooke, Lord Ribblesdale's recollections of his son, or Mrs. Kettle's of her husband, are in every way worthy of their objects. Even in the book before us there are chapters, notably those on Basil Hallam and Donald Hankey, which are simple and reverential records by those who knew; there are also short passages, such as Mr. Cyril Asquith's letter about Douglas Gillespie, or Mr. Winston Churchill's slight recollections of Harry Butters, that sparkling young American, which every one will read with pleasure. But when Mr. Osborn himself comes on the scene all dignity, all poetry is gone, except when the poets are allowed to speak for themselves. We feel strongly that he has done no service to the memory of those he sets out to celebrate. The true and permanent memorials to these gallant comrades are raised elsewhere, indited by fuller hearts and with greater reverence. Yet this book is but a sign of our national inadequacy to express a great emotion greatly; we neither think profoundly nor write with majesty. And here we fall lamentably behind the French, who allowed men of the calibre of Péguy, Ernest Psichari, and Guillaume Apollinaire to descend into the trenches, and who yet have left minds fine enough to celebrate their dead in language from which all grossness is purged, as nobly as these poets, had they lived, would have uttered the last words over their fallen brothers in arms. The feeling, if it can be called a feeling at all, is a symbol of all that will be wrong and all that will be false in the less happy of our public memorials. The very title of this book typifies a too common misunderstanding of the crisis which has cost these lives and of the solemnity of the struggle which called a whole nation to arms.

Messrs. Allen and Unwin will shortly publish a collection of "Documents and Statements Relating to Peace Proposals and War Aims (December, 1916—1918)," with an introduction by G. Lowes Dickinson.

Messrs. Sidgwick and Jackson's forthcoming verse includes "Loyalties," by John Drinkwater; "Poems and Rhymes," by Jeffery Day. Flight Commander, R.N.A.S., with a portrait; "A Cornish Chorus," by Bernard Moore; and "War's Embers," by Ivor Gurney, author of "Severn and Somme."

THE GAY-DOMBEYS.

Sir Harry Johnston has hit on an original and entertaining notion for this his first novel, *THE GAY-DOMBEYS* (Chatto and Windus, 7s. net.). It is therefore a little hard on him that he should fill us chiefly with a desire to get through "The Gay-Dombey" as quickly as is decent in order that we may read "Dombey and Son" over again. He is, however, so devout a lover of Dickens that he may sympathize and forgive. His notion has been to trace the history of the chief Dombey characters and their numerous descendants through the later Victorian period and so onwards till he kills some of them in the great war. In the first chapter we meet a number of them at a family dinner party at the house of Sir Walter and Lady Gay-Dombey, who are, of course, Walter Gay and Florence. Walter resuscitated and increased the glories of the house, took the name of Dombey, and begot a large family, each of whom was gratefully christened after an old friend. There is Paul, the eldest son, now the mainstay of the house and, as Major Bagstock would say, "the Colossus of Commerce." There is Lucretia, who commemorates Miss Tox, and Solomon, called after Sol Gills, a pompous clergyman, "Grandpapa all over again, in a different way," as his sister Lady Feenix describes him. He married a Miss Cornelia Knipper-Totes, whose parentage is obvious; she was called Cornelia after Mrs. Feeder (*née* Blimber). Lady Feenix, who married the descendant of "Cousin Feenix," was christened Susan after Miss Nipper, but prefers to be called Suzanne, just as Fanny, the namesake of her poor dear grandmother who would not make an effort, likes to be called Frances. Besides the members of the family we meet Sir James Tudell, a railway magnate, descendant of Polly Toodle, one of whose sons, it will be remembered, became a Charitable Grinder; and Sir Eustace Morven, a distinguished African explorer, son of Mr. Morfin and Miss Harriet Carver. Scattered through the book we light on Gradgrinds, Westlocks, Verisophts, Harmons, Hawks and Snodgrasses, and an eminent politician, Josiah Choselwhit, presumably a godson of the late Mr. Bounderby of Coketown. And when Morven writes letters about West Africa, irrelevant to the story but full of capital pieces of description, he addresses them to Professor Lavery, who is doubtless related to that talented artist, Mrs. T. Linkinwater.

Sir Harry Johnston has clearly had the greatest fun in composing these elaborate genealogies and following the various members of the different families down their little by-paths of history; but his readers' point of view will probably be rather different. Those who do not like Dickens will be puzzled or irritated, and those who do may have their attention distracted from the story by uneasy doubts as to whether they are missing some recondite allusion. Perhaps, however, the story does not matter so much as the picture of a period. Sir Harry Johnston has no doubt known many of the interesting people of his time, and he boldly introduces some of them as well as others with fictitious names who tempt us to essays in identifications. Mr. Josiah Choselwhit, for example, the Midland politician, had "split off from the Liberal Radical Party over Home Rule. He was tall, spare, rather distinguished-looking, wore immovably an eyeglass, and had a long pointed nose and an air of quizzical imperturbability." The author has certainly given us a vivid picture of the politicians and actresses and journalists and pro-consuls and smart ladies who appeared to make the world go round in the later days of Queen Victoria, and it is a pity that he has a little overcrowded his canvas. He is so prodigal of invention and has so many little irrelevant histories to tell that he seems to be for ever hurrying over something of secondary importance to get to the thing. We sometimes feel disposed to say, as the Chicken did to Mrs. Toots, "I want to know whether this here gammon is to finish it or whether you're a-going in to win." Sir Harry never does quite go in and win. He explains to us so much about his people that there never seems to be time for them to explain themselves. And so we feel more and more hustled till we get to the last page, when we turn with a sigh of relief to the bookcase and murmur, "Now for Mr. Toots."

THE MOON AND SIXPENCE.

The portrayal of genius is a hazardous undertaking, over which many a talented author has come to grief; and we must confess to having felt a certain misgiving when we took up Mr. Somerset Maugham's *THE MOON AND SIXPENCE* and found on the very first page that the greatness of Charles Strickland was authentic and his genius undoubted. Let us therefore make the *amende honorable* by confessing that the misgiving was very soon dispelled, and that Mr. Maugham has given us a ruthless and penetrating study in personality with a savage truthfulness of delineation and an icy contempt for the heroic and the sentimental.

Charles Strickland's story is easily told: a seemingly commonplace individual of the stockbroker type, respectably married, seized one day by a sudden overwhelming impulse to paint, leaves his family with the briefest of notes to say that he has gone to Paris and will not come back; lives and paints in Paris; goes out to Tahiti; lives and paints there; dies of leprosy. Such are the bald outlines, gathered (somewhat after the manner of Mr. Conrad) from various characters who had run up against him at one stage or another of his remarkable career. The debit side of his account is lamentably obvious—peculiar

ruin of their wives, and so forth. The credit side of such an account is more easily overlooked; not the poverty, and the squalor, and the lack of material reward (for he was indifferent to these), but the unceasing toil, the spiritual isolation, the torturing obsessions of a spirit for ever striving to express the inexpressible—this is what the world fails to comprehend. The best key to Strickland's character is provided by his comment on Peter Breughel:—"He's all right. I bet he found it hell to paint."

The real tragedy of the Strickland affair (and one knows of similar affairs outside the world of books) lies in the failure to balance the two accounts. The world knew not of Strickland's hell, and he neither knew nor cared that he gave generous measure of it to the world, or at any rate to such part of it as came into contact with him. The conception of an artist romantically calling his friends to share his sacrifices, of their instant and generous rally, is an easy one; they know themselves to be necessary to the artist, and in his appreciation they have their reward. But Strickland appreciated the sacrifice of his friends about as much as the constrictor at the Zoo appreciates the sacrifice of the rabbit thrown into his cage for dinner. Both sides of his nature were abnormally developed, and completely divorced from one another. His physical being was a reversion to that of the primeval savage, whilst his spiritual being was one continuous obsession; from neither could the normal human amenities evoke any response. Such is Mr. Maugham's analysis of the tragedy; and, merciless as it seems, it is not uncharitable, and it explains much.

LOOSE ENDS.

The title of Mr. Arnold Lunn's new novel (*Hutchinson, 6s. 9d. net.*) is *LOOSE ENDS*. The appropriate criticism of it could be compressed into the same two words. We sympathize rather with its author; he has a great many things to say, and perhaps he feels that, since the publishers will not print and the public will not buy discursive writings, no matter what wisdom they contain, it is necessary for him to give his musings a veneer of fiction. He will, in return, not be offended if we frankly recognize his book for what it is—a very lively tract in dialogue on that controversial subject, public school education—yet review it as an example of what it sets out to be, a novel. As a novel it suffers from want of concentration on any one case. There are at least three cases which might have been worthily treated. There is the case of Maurice Leigh and his growing up, which is complicated by the fact that he was a cross between an ante-diluvian British strain, with all the strong, unquestioned and unquestioning virtues of this strain, and a more dreamy, cultured, inquisitive and indecisive stock. Mr. Lunn makes a certain play with the development of this case, but he is continually being diverted by the other two cases. The second case is that of Maurice's mother, from whom he inherits the unsettling qualities which make life more of a problem to him than to his stolid brother Tom. Mr. Lunn handles her case wisely and sympathetically. Her tragedy is the gradual loss of the young mind which, in its early youth, she had found so responsive. Maurice fades away from her gradually towards his own generation, as every son does; it is inevitable, but the mother's disappointment is none the less tragic. Here, again, Mr. Lunn fails because of the looseness of his ends; he states his case, but he does not put it poignantly on the stage. One feels all the time that it is only one among the many things which he has to say. The third case, already familiar to readers of "The Loom of Youth" and "Mr. Perrin and Mr. Trail," is that of Quirk, the enthusiastic young idealist, teacher of English in a school which concentrates on turning out Blues, who makes a gallant but tactless effort to recast some of the accepted values in this successful institution. Quirk is the best drawn of all the characters, but one gets a far better impression of his restless talkativeness and his violent prejudices than of his complete personality.

What Mr. Lunn really cares about is discussion; and his discussions are very good and very lively, particularly those between Quirk and Fel owes, the genially disappointed idealist, also familiar, who, without being hide-bound himself, puts the conservative case extremely well. In the course of their talks we range over all the subjects which would naturally come up in a whole term of midnight undergraduate wranglings: literature, old and new, faith and agnosticism, the use of games, the purpose of education, Dickens, Wells, Conrad, Haeckel, Bergson, William James and so on. Read as a philosophical symposium, and not too continuously, this is a very pleasant and amusing book. It abounds in witty, if mildly cynical, remarks, such as the following of the family of "Blues" to which the public school in question owed its rise:—

Nearly every member of the family played for "The Gentlemen," few but were qualified to represent "The Players"; a very proper line is, however, drawn between the professional "coach," that only teaches cricket, and the cricket coach, that teaches Latin as well.

We suppose it is necessary that this continual hammering at the public mind in the matter of secondary education should continue, but it is a trifle dreary from an artistic point of view. It will not be from this direction that a new breath will blow over English fiction.

Mr. Murray, whose forthcoming fiction includes a psychological novel by E. F. Benson entitled "Across the Stream," and a mystery story by Gertrude Atherton entitled "The Avalanche," also announces the return of Stanley Weyman with an historical tale entitled "The Great House; A Story of Quiet Times." The period covered is that

Roe (Norman). SONNETS OF OLD THINGS; and other verses. Liverpool, "Daily Post" Printers, Wood Street, 1919. 7½ in. 53 pp., 3/6 n. 821.9

Upwards of a score of sonnets, together with fourteen other pieces of verse. Several of them are pleasing, and the rhymes as a rule show that the author's ear is good. So, also, is his choice of words.

Williams (Llewellyn E.). KNIGHTS ADVENTURERS. Simpkin & Marshall, 1918. 8 in. 46 pp. paper, 1/6 821.9

Meritorious war verse, of which the most notable pieces, perhaps, are "Fear," "The Homecoming," and "The Gunner."

FICTION.

Brady (Cyrus Townsend) and Brady (Cyrus Townsend), jr. WEB OF STEEL. Stanley Paul [1919]. 8 in. 320 pp. 7/ n. 813.5

Two experts, father and son, novelist and civil engineer, have co-operated in this romance of love and engineering, in which the capable but quixotic hero and the lordly young lady of American fiction are of less interest than the rise and fall of a vast cantilever bridge and the escape of a great dam—and the valley and town below it—from destruction by a flood.

The Burning Spear: being the experiences of Mr. John Lavender in time of war; recorded by A. R. P.—m. Chatto & Windus, 1919. 7½ in. 255 pp., 5/ n.

Were we not compelled to accept the publishers' word for it, we should hesitate to believe that the author of this "new 'Don Quixote'" was "one of the most distinguished of modern writers." The characterization of Mr. John Lavender is vague and ponderous. He is as foolish as most people, and a good deal less human.

Goodchild (George). THE LAND OF ELDORADO: a tale of the Seal Islands. Jarrolds [1919]. 7½ in. 261 pp., 6/ n.

The story opens in the nineties on the Yukon, in approved Bret Harte style; shifts to a lonely isle in Bering Sea, where an over-civilized muscular hero is transported for manslaughter; and proceeds in the more sophisticated fashion of a love romance with the adventures of his adopted daughter.

***Johnson (Sir Harry).** THE GAY-DOMBEYS. Chatto & Windus, 1919. 8 in. 332 pp., 7/ n.

A rich, curious novel. For the confirmed novel-reader it will be almost overwhelming after his long diet of mild prepared foods and an occasional thimbleful of tart wine. The mind staggers away from a feast of delight.

Lawrence (C. E.). SUCH STUFF AS DREAMS. Murray, 1919. 8 in. 308 pp., 7/ n.

There are some pretty character-drawing, of the lighter Dickensian type, and a touch of the moral apologue, in this fanciful story of a city clerk who, through a cerebral lesion, sees the immortals of old time still walking the London streets, and ingeminates, "We must bring in the Past to mend the ideals of the Present."

Lunn (Arnold). LOOSE ENDS. Hutchinson [1919]. 8 in. 320 pp., 6/9 n.

Yet another variation upon a theme which the public mind seems never to have heard too often. Maurice Chattel, a very human boy with an unusual temperament and artistic leanings, tries to adapt himself to the everyday life in a great public school.

***Maugham (W. Somerset).** THE MOON AND SIXPENCE. Heinemann, 1919. 8 in. 263 pp., 7/ n.

One of the hardest things in fiction is to paint a convincing portrait of genius; yet Mr. Maugham seems to have wilfully handicapped himself with improbabilities. Strickland is a stodgy stockbroker till forty, then runs away from his wife and family, and achieves the aim of his being—he becomes one of the greatest of revolutionary painters. But the improbabilities serve cleverly to bring out his originality, and the result is a creation of singular force and impressiveness, to which some other odd characters and incidents contribute solidity.

Reeves (Arthur B.). THE ADVENTURERS: a Craig Kennedy detective story. Collins [1919]. 7½ in. 248 pp., 6/ n.

A great mystery has to be tackled by the famous detective Craig Kennedy, and he proves equal to the occasion. By

the time that the reader, panting from his struggles in the maelstrom of mystery, has reached the end of the book, he will find that two extraordinary robberies, the death of a financier, the strange conduct of certain people, two attempted murders, and various other little matters, have been satisfactorily explained.

Whitehead (Cecll). TRIVIALITIES. Digby & Long, 1918. 7½ in. 247 pp. 4/ n.

A smart cynicism seems to be the chief aim of this score of short stories and dialogues, most of which are rather crude specimens of magazine fiction. A favourable example is the sketch called "A Sentimental Dialogue."

910 GEOGRAPHY, TOPOGRAPHY, ANTIQUITIES.

Africa. THE SOUTH AND EAST AFRICAN YEAR-BOOK AND GUIDE; with coloured maps, plans, and diagrams; ed. annually by A. Samler Brown and G. Gordon Brown, for the Union-Castle Mail Steamship Co., 1919. 25th ed. Sampson Low; Cape Town, Juta & Co., 1919. 7½ in. 827 pp., maps, plans, diags., ind., 2/6. 916.8

Full of information indispensable to persons who contemplate visiting South and East Africa.

Fraser (G. M.). THE STRANGER'S GUIDE TO ABERDEEN. Aberdeen, "Aberdeen Daily Journal" and "Evening Express" Office, Broad Street, 1919. 6 in. 80 pp. il. maps, ind. paper, 6d. 914.125

Visitors to the "Granite City" at the mouth of the Dee will be indebted to the Librarian of the Aberdeen Public Library for this instructive little guide. The author is evidently an enthusiast in his subject, and has set forth his facts with some originality of arrangement.

920 BIOGRAPHY.

Bolton (Charles Knowles). THE FOUNDERS: portraits of persons born abroad who came to the colonies in North America before the year 1701; with an introduction, biographical outlines and comments on the portraits by C. K. Bolton. Boston, Mass, Boston Athenæum, 1919. 2 vols. 9 in. 343, 361 pp. pors. ind., \$12. 920.07

A year ago the Boston Athenæum held an exhibition of portraits of men and women who helped to found what is now the United States of America. This created much interest, and these two substantial volumes are an outcome of it. Mr. Bolton, the librarian of the institution, has devoted immense pains to the preparation of the work, examining the evidence of the authenticity of each portrait admitted, and supplying short biographies of the originals of the portraits. These biographical notices alone represent a large amount of research, and contain many facts hitherto unknown. The place of honour in the first volume is given to William Penn's wife Hannah, and in the second volume to Sir George Downing, who figures in Pepys's Diary as a "stingy fellow," and whose name is perpetuated in Downing Street. His portrait, like several of the others, has not been previously reproduced. It is of interest to note that, of the 125 portraits included, 97 represent Englishmen, 14 Dutch, and 9 French, the remaining 5 comprising Swedes, Germans, and a Bohemian. The Boston Athenæum has made a worthy contribution to American history.

Daly (Augustin)

Daly (Francis Joseph). THE LIFE OF AUGUSTIN DALY. N.Y., Macmillan Co., 1917. 9 in. 683 pp. il. pors. ind. 21/ n. 920

The chief interest to the English public of this biography lies in the record of the relations between the famous American theatrical manager and various men of letters, Tennyson, Oscar Wilde, Henry James and Sardou (who seems to have treated Daly very badly). There is much that will be welcome about the great actress Miss Ada Rehan.

Harris (Joel Chandler).

Harris (Julla Collier). THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS. Constable, 1919. 9 in. 631 pp. il. pors. bib. ind., 18/ n. 920

The creator of "Uncle Remus" appears in this biography as one would imagine him—simple, kindly, humorous, unconscious of his own talent to an extreme of diffidence. On the other hand, it reveals many qualities that one would not imagine: a solid critical sense anchored in the common reality,

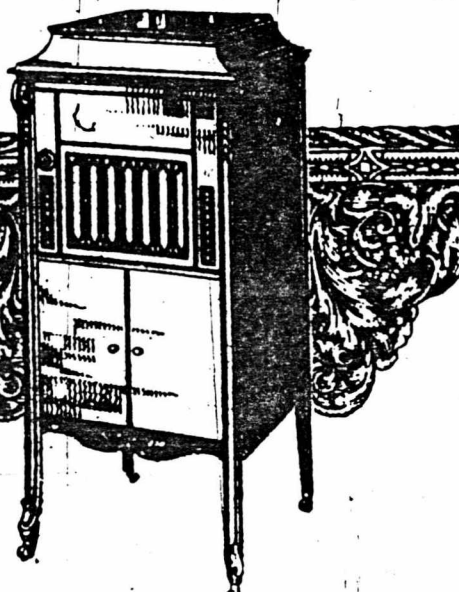


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Books of the Day.

ADVENTURES IN ROMANCE.

George Wyndham was a statesman, a soldier, a sportsman, a student, a man of society and (within limits) of pleasure. He was well-born, handsome, charming, brilliant. When a bright being of this kind strays into our drab world like Phæbus into the house of Admetus, we gladly admire. We call him a man of the Renaissance, looking back with envy to that adventurous period in which men were versatile because they saw so many ways converging upon the temple of glad life. They made an art of living; and all their fighting, loving, painting, reading, feasting, plotting went to fill up the sum of the great adventure. George Wyndham was one of them in spirit. Lids to him was a great joy and a great adventure, and he lived it fully.

But, while we admire, we are tempted to breathe the slighting word "amateur." In some sense George Wyndham was an amateur, inasmuch as what he did he did because, for one reason or another, he liked it. In another sense, he was far from being an amateur, inasmuch as what he did, he did with mastery. He was a real soldier, a real sportsman (we remember Ireland), a real statesman (we remember Ireland), a real writer. The reader who doubts his own judgment on this point, afraid lest it is affected by the glamour of the man, may well heed what is said in the introduction by Mr. Charles Whibley, who not only knew Wyndham, but knows better than anyone living what is good and what is not good in the art of writing and the science of scholarship. What less gifted, less ardent souls spend their lives in fumbling after Wyndham took in his stride. He would study and write. He flung himself into the task, mingling the scholar's patience with the artist's joy; and the amateur did better than most of the professionals in the mere technique of the thing. There is more in it than that. He lived in the world; he knew what it was to sleep under the stars, to risk his life, to manage or command men, to feel his blood running high in his veins. And this eagerness for life, this experience of life, fit him in colour to all that he writes. There, in the end, lies the true delight of this book—in the gallant passion of the author for life, his frank and fine delight in the things that he found good.

There is room in them [in North's periods, that is] for fine words and lofty phrases; and these go bragging by, the one following a space after the other, like cars in an endless parade. The movement of his procession rolls on; yet he halts it at pleasure, to soften a stroke with a gracious saying, or to set a flourish on the bravery of his theme.

Few men, nowadays, dare to write like that; and few who dared could do it, because few have so much adventurous joy in the conscious conduct of his life as had Wyndham. If you fall on these lines, you fall, notably, but Wyndham would not fall, for with him it was not swag or affection, but conscious enjoyment, and delight.

So you may read in this book almost anywhere and be glad of it. Yet it would be a mistake to suppose that, because it flings cloak and flashes rapier, it is beneath the notice of the bookman; it is full of nothing more than that. Now and then there is a dash of the old-fashioned "The House of Bunsen" in an example. This was a task set Wyndham by his friend, W. E. Henley; and Wyndham fulfilled it with very unmaudlin thoroughness. He has loaded it with details about Shakespeare's life and the Elizabethan stage which he studied from a sense of duty and with very little interest. In the criticism he is so anxious to do justice to Henley's belief in him that he allows the detail to swamp the fire. Much of the essay, indeed, is merely respectable, and some of it is positively dull. It is very different with two of the other papers in the book—the study of North's Plutarch or rather of North and Amyot and Plutarch— which he wrote as an introduction to the edition of North in the "Penguin Classics" and "The Poets of the Prison," "Elizabethan Adventure in Elizabethan Literature," and "Sir Walter Scott." These materials to serve for a big book on romance that Wyndham was planning. That book was never written. But here, already in being, is a book on romance which does more for romantic literature than study its history and offer a theory of its origin. It makes the study of literature itself a romantic adventure. It rescues scholarship from dullness and criticism from pedantry. It brings life into literature and shows literature a part of life. And the next time we have to read an American University monograph on a literary subject, we shall give to the editor with a grateful George Wyndham on some well-found adventure after beauty.

THE LIFE OF MATTER. Edited by Arthur Turnbull, M.A., B.Sc., M.B. (Williams and Norgate, 7s. 6d. net.)
There is a fascination in the title of this book, suggesting to the mind as it does the vast panorama of evolution. Nor are our expectations discouraged by the introductory allegory picturing the advent of man, his toil up the evolutionary valley to the mountains of vision, and the outlook thence upon the happy vistas bounded by the distant horizon of his destiny. But Mr. Turnbull's ambition was not so great as title and allegory would lead us to suppose. He has, on the other hand, written a very useful little book, which should be found in the library of every institution having for its purpose the introduction of youth to the mystery and romance of modern science.

Mr. Turnbull's method is as sound as his purpose is excellent. The book is divided into sections, each dealing with different facets of the great question of the "Life of Matter" (or perhaps more properly expressed, to catch Mr. Turnbull's intention, as "Life in Matter"). Each section consists of an historical account of some of the most significant scientific experiments bearing on the question with a brief indication of the exact points which they are intended to illustrate. At the end of each section the various threads are gathered up and woven into a concise statement of the conclusion to which they have led and the various theories of them as preliminary to further investigation.

But notwithstanding that he has, no doubt, accomplished his purpose, we think the value of his work would have been much enhanced if his diction had been less jerky and jolly and a little clearer language had been used in the rehashing of facts and presentation of conclusions.

The book, too, is not without its inaccuracies. For instance, on page 11 Mr. Turnbull speaks of the "chemical name for hydrochloric acid" as "HCL." He meant the chemical symbol for hydrogen, a mistake which he repeats on page 21. He speaks of common salt as "sodium chloride" instead of "sodium chloride." He speaks of "sodium" as the "general summary" of the chemical elements and their changes. He probably meant not "changes," but "combinations" or "reactions." On page 81 he refers to plants as having been subjected to exposure to light and heat in a line or two lower down, as if the exposure had been to carbonic acid gas. He cannot, of course, think that coal gas and carbonic acid gas are one and the same. On page 82, in speaking of specks of dust, the molecule of the word "molecules" is misspelled. All highly technical terms, in fact, are so misspelled. But if the book does not rise quite to the dignity of its title, neither does it necessarily fall below the standard set by its author.

The World of Letters

A short list of new books for the general reader—
"A History of the French Novel," Vol. II, "From 1800 to 1900." By George Salathury. (Macmillan, 15s. net.)
"A Westward Pilgrim." By Sir Frederick Bridge. (Hutchinson, 7s. 6d.)
"The Forest Fire." By E. Temple Thurston. (Cassell, 7s. 6d.)

Association books—that is to say, books which are interesting on account of those who have previously owned or annotated them—have been praised by Andrew Lang and Mr. Austin Dobson, both in prose and verse. In an English book, the "World of Letters" is an association book, and Mr. Lang exclaims: "What company we might all keep if the old lovers of our old books could visit us! Each work volume you pick up on a stall has had its masters and mistresses, folk quite as good as you, and better often. Sometimes they leave their mark—some in the margins on the covers or in the fly-leaf, and some are anonymous and only to be conjectured. And, inspired by having bought a copy of Diderot's 'Encyclopédie,' in old French red morocco and watered silk, which had been the gift of Prince Henry of Prussia to C. Colville, Minister Plenipotentiaire de France in Berlin, Andrew Lang wrote his poem 'Ghosts in a Library,' recounting his own association books. They included books owned by Napoleon, Sir Walter Scott, Gambetta, and a 'little old fellow Molineux,' on the subject of the 'Pots' unknown to Lang." Except for one doubtful letter in the spelling of his name, it is possible to fancy that Pot may not be entirely without distinction. He may, for all we know, have been the man about whom, and Johnson, Scott tells an anecdote in "The Croker Papers":

I was told that a gentleman called Pot, or some such name, was introduced to me [Johnson] by the Rev. Mr. Diderot, who had been the author of the 'Encyclopédie.' He was a Frenchman and had been in England for some time. He was a very good man and had a great deal of money. He was very kind to me and had given me a great deal of help. He was very kind to me and had given me a great deal of help. He was very kind to me and had given me a great deal of help.

Suppose a magician were to offer you a library of all the association books you cared to choose, which would they be? Some have only to be mentioned to be desired—the North's "Plutarch" and Florio's "Montaigne" that Shakespeare read; the Chapman's "Plutarch" that Keats had read; the "Pots" that Keats had read; the "Queen Mab" that Shelley sent to Byron; the review copies of "Endymion" that were used by Gifford and Lockhart for the notorious "Quarterly" and "Black and White" attacks on the "Littérateur"; the book, possessed by James T. Fields, the American collector, where Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats stand bound together, three in one, with Leigh Hunt's notes sometimes covering the book; the copy of the "Bourgeois de Noyon" that P. G. Patmore took in his pocket when he accompanied Hazlitt to the prize-fight, and out of which they both read; the Fielding's "Amelia" that Johnson read through with a copy of Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy" in the only book Johnson affirmed that ever took him out of bed two hours sooner than he wished to rise. This last book, by the way, is a treasure indeed. Mr. Dobson tells us, in his essay on "Johnson's Library," that it was bought up with Sir Matthew Hale's Originals by the Rev. Mr. Manning. At Johnson's sale it was bought by one William Collins, and afterwards was presented to the Philological Society, so that it was used by Sir James Murray in the preparation of the "Oxford Dictionary."

To these, if the magician were still amenable, I should add some more. The volumes of Madame de Sévigné's letters which Horace Walpole owned and loved, and the romances of Marivaux and Crébillon of which Grey said that it was his notion of Paradise to do nothing but read; the "Pots" that Keats had read; the "Queen Mab" that Shelley sent to Byron; the review copies of "Endymion" that were used by Gifford and Lockhart for the notorious "Quarterly" and "Black and White" attacks on the "Littérateur"; the book, possessed by James T. Fields, the American collector, where Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats stand bound together, three in one, with Leigh Hunt's notes sometimes covering the book; the copy of the "Bourgeois de Noyon" that P. G. Patmore took in his pocket when he accompanied Hazlitt to the prize-fight, and out of which they both read; the Fielding's "Amelia" that Johnson read through with a copy of Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy" in the only book Johnson affirmed that ever took him out of bed two hours sooner than he wished to rise. This last book, by the way, is a treasure indeed. Mr. Dobson tells us, in his essay on "Johnson's Library," that it was bought up with Sir Matthew Hale's Originals by the Rev. Mr. Manning. At Johnson's sale it was bought by one William Collins, and afterwards was presented to the Philological Society, so that it was used by Sir James Murray in the preparation of the "Oxford Dictionary."

Where the books come from? They come from the Red Cross War Library, which has sent over six million books and pamphlets to hospitals at home and abroad since the beginning of the war. Each book is stamped with a red cross and a number, and it is intended to be given to the hospital which it is to serve. The books are sent out in two hundred boxes a week, and each box contains a variety of books, and each box is sent out with a letter from the Red Cross War Library, explaining the purpose of the books and the names of the hospitals to which they are sent.

Two copies of Miss Burney's "Cecilia" would be added to my list—the copy that induced Burke to write to the novelist, and the copy that was read by the Duke of Devonshire in a single day. Alongside the latter I should like to place the copy of the second volume of the "Decline and Fall" which Gibbon presented to the Duke of Gloucester. The Duke, we are told, received the historical work with a good nature and an affability, saying to him as he laid the quarto on the table, "Another d-d thick, square book! Always scribble, scribble, scribble! Eh! Mr. Gibbon!" On my fiction shelf I would also have the copies of Mrs. Radcliffe's "The Mystical Mother" and of other novels of the time. Another I should like to see before me would be the copy of "Northanger Abbey" as well as the volumes of Galt's "Entail" which Scott and Byron both read three times, and over which the latter wept. Byron borrowed his copy from the Duke of Devonshire, and returned it, copiously scribbled with notes. He said to Lady Bessington:

When I first knew Galt, years ago, I was not in a frame of mind to form an impartial opinion of him; his mildness and equanimity struck me even then; but to say the truth, his manner was so good, and his style so good, that I was struck by his aristocratic taste, and finding I could not awe him into a respect sufficiently profound for my sublime self, either as a poet or as a novelist, I was obliged to give up the idea of writing a satire on him. There is a quiet humour and observance of character in his novels that interest me very much, and when he was so kind as to send me a copy of his "Northanger Abbey," I was obliged to give up the idea of writing a satire on him. There is a quiet humour and observance of character in his novels that interest me very much, and when he was so kind as to send me a copy of his "Northanger Abbey," I was obliged to give up the idea of writing a satire on him.

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WORK OF RED CROSS LIBRARY.

INTERVIEW WITH DR. HAGBERG WRIGHT.

The British Red Cross War Library has sent over six million books and pamphlets to hospitals at home and abroad since the beginning of the war. Each book is stamped with a red cross and a number, and it is intended to be given to the hospital which it is to serve. The books are sent out in two hundred boxes a week, and each box contains a variety of books, and each box is sent out with a letter from the Red Cross War Library, explaining the purpose of the books and the names of the hospitals to which they are sent.

CHOOSE THE BOOKS.
Beyond that entrance hall is the place where the books are at work, and beyond that again the big room where the work of selection is done. Dr. Hagberg Wright [who shares with Mrs. Gaskell the honorary secretaryship of the library] explained how thoroughly the importance of selection is realized. "It is not a matter of taking any books that come and sending them anywhere," he said. "We want to make all the parcels as good as they can be, as varied and as comprehensive as possible. The choosing of the books is done by voluntary workers, who really know books and know as much as possible about the special needs of the places to which the parcels are sent. This work has been superintended by Mrs. Gaskell, to whose energy and administration the success of the library has been mainly due."

It has been found that there is a steady demand for the best poetry, and yet the best interesting features of the library is its edition of the "Pots" which are bound in handy little volumes neatly to be held by feeble hands. Loading up to the selection rooms there is a whole series of other rooms, all full of books, though not so full as the committee of the library would like to see them. The unworked material is piled up like the wildest tangle of Hieronymus, but behind the semblance of confusion there is definite order and admirable system. The arrangement is not unlike the method of supplying ammunition to the front-line in a battle. The books are piled up in the selection rooms, and from there they are carried to the hospitals, where they are distributed to the appropriate dumps, just as shells are distributed.

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MACMILLAN'S LIST

A History of the French Novel (To the Close of the 19th Century). By GEORGE SALATHURY, M.A., Hon. D.Lit., Vol. II. From 1800 to 1900. 6s. 10s. net.

Christopher and Columbus A Novel by the Author of "Elizabeth and Her German Garden." 7s. 6d. net.

The Secret City By HUGH WALFOLE. 7s. 6d. net.

The Calling of an Agate Essays by W. B. YEATS. 6s. net.

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THE ECONOMIC FOUNDATIONS OF PEACE

World-Partnership as the Basis of the League of Nations.

By J. L. GARVIN, Editor of THE OBSERVER. 12s. net.

The order of the book puts the twenty-one chapters into five groups. The first group traces the economic antecedents of the war of nations and empires; the second tells how international organizations in the struggle created a great working model of economic world-partnership; the third set of chapters deals with the abnormal problems of the Transition, and shows that they can only be adequately handled by a continuance and even by some enlargement of the economic machinery now in operation under America and the Allies; the fourth, and fullest, series shows the insufficiency of a typical political constitution, as so far proposed for the League, to maintain and sustain the general peace, but goes on to explain the more constructive method in its many aspects; while the concluding chapters study key-questions—like the Russian problem, the future of the League, the League's attitude to the League of Nations, American and British alternatives—any one of which might decide for good or ill the whole fortunes of the post-war system.

It is almost better to be against the League of Nations than not to think of it at all. The author's contribution has been to show the author, to believe that the entire cooperation of peoples is the only likely alternative to the return of that international climate of competition which will engulf us. From what we may fairly expect a new way of working together, addition to the political machinery of the League, there is everything to expect. It is not a matter of course, but a matter of necessity, that the League should be continued and extended to include the civilian hospitals. Of course, our work for the Army and Navy will not be over for a long time to come, for there are many men who will be in hospital for years to come. But the requirements are diminishing every day, and we want to extend our scope to include the civilian hospitals, and to make our War Library a permanent institution. I have drawn up a scheme for such a library which costs for £2,000 a year. That sum would cover the rent of a building, salary and wages of a librarian and his assistants and a porter, cost of purchasing and collecting books, and an adequate inspection and supervision of the hospital libraries when they were established. We should have what remains of the libraries of the demolished hospitals for a nucleus, and the work which has been carried on through the War Library could be transferred to the new library. The scheme is to be submitted to the Red Cross for their consideration, and all who have seen and know the value of the War Library are very anxious for it to be carried through.

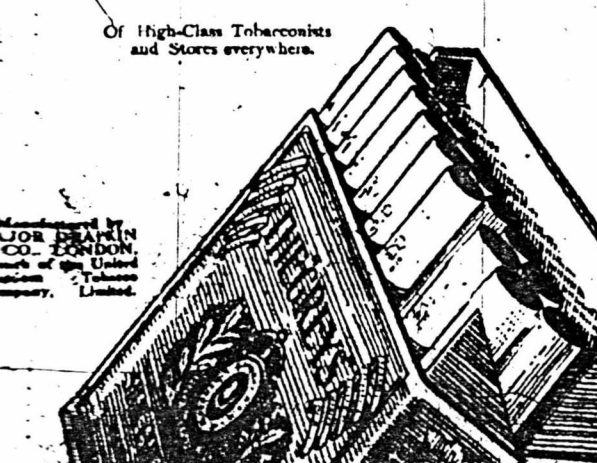
From the Preface to *The Economic Foundations of Peace*.
MACMILLAN & CO., LIMITED, LONDON, W.C.2.

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Harold (after a violent display of affection). "TISN'T 'COS I LOVE YOU—IT'S 'COS YOU SMELL SO NICE."

OUR BOOKING-OFFICE.

(By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks.)

THE Great Man is, I suppose, among the most difficult themes to treat convincingly in fiction. To name but one handicap, the author has in such cases to postulate at least some degree of acquaintance on the part of the reader with his celebrated subject. "Everyone is now familiar," he will observe, "with the sensational triumph achieved by the work of X—;" whereat the reader, uneasily conscious of never having heard of him, inclines to condemn the whole business beforehand as an impossible fable. I fancy Mr. SOMERSET MAUGHAM felt something of this difficulty with regard to the protagonist of his quaintly-called *The Moon and Sixpence* (HEINEMANN), since, for all his sly pretence of quoting imaginary authorities, we have really only his unsupported word for the superlative genius of *Charles Strickland*, the stockbroker who abandoned respectable London to become a Post-impressionist master, a vagabond and ultimately a Pacific Islander. The more credit then to Mr. MAUGHAM that he does quite definitely make us accept the fellow at his valuation. He owes this, perhaps, to the unsparring realism of the portrait. Heartless, utterly egotistical, without conscience or scruple or a single redeeming feature beyond the one consuming purpose of his art, *Strickland* is alive as few figures in recent fiction have been; a genuinely great though repellent personality—a man whom it would have been at once an event to have met and a pleasure to have kicked. Mr. MAUGHAM has certainly done nothing better than this book about him; the drily sardonic humour of his method makes the picture not only credible but compelling. I liked especially the characteristic touch that shows *Strickland* escaping, not so much from the dull

routine of stockbroking (genius has done that often enough in stories before now) as from the pseudo-artistic atmosphere of a flat in Westminster and a wife who collected blue china and mild celebrities. *Mrs. Strickland* indeed is among the best of the slighter characters in a tale with a singularly small cast; though it is, of course, by the central figure that it stands or falls. My own verdict is an unhesitating *stet*.

If there be any who still cherish a pleasant memory of the Bonnie Prince CHARLIE of the Jacobite legend, Miss MARJORIE BOWEN'S *Mr. Misfortunate* (COLLINS) will dispose of it. She gives us a study of the YOUNG PRETENDER in the decade following Culloden. Figures such as LOCHIEL, KEITH, GORING, the dour KELLY, HENRY STUART, LOUIS XV., with sundry courtiers and mistresses, move across the film. I should say the author's sympathy is with her main subject, but her conscience is too much for her. I find myself increasingly exercised over this conscience of Miss BOWEN'S. She seems to me to be deliberately committing herself to what I can only describe as a staccato method. This was notably the case with *The Burning Glass*, her last novel. Her narratives no longer seem to flow. She will give you catalogues of furniture and raiment, with short scenes interspersed, for all the world as if she were transcribing from carefully taken notes. Quite probably she is, and I am being authentically instructed and should be duly grateful, but I find myself longing for the exuberance of her earlier method. I feel quite sure this competent author can find a way of respecting historical truth without killing the full-blooded flavour of romance.

There is a smack of the Emily Besantine about the earnest

INARTICULATIONS

THE MOON AND SIXPENCE. By W. S. Maugham. (Heinemann. 7s. net.)

HAD Mr. Maugham confessed to his hero Charles Strickland, a painter of genius, his great desire to present him, to explain him to the public, with all his eccentricities, violences and odious ways included, we imagine the genius would have retorted in his sardonic way: "Go to hell. Let them look at my pictures or not look at them—damn them. My painting is all there is to me." This discouraging reply is not without a large grain of truth. Strickland cut himself off from the body of life, clumsily, obstinately, savagely—hacking away, regardless of torn flesh and quivering nerves, like some old Maori warrior separating himself from a shattered limb with a piece of sharp shell. What proof have we that he suffered? No proof at all. On the contrary, each fresh ugly blow wrung a grin or a chuckle from him, but never the slightest sign that he would have had it otherwise if he could.

If we had his pictures before us, or the memory of them in our mind's eye, this his state of mind might be extremely illuminating, but without them, with nothing to reinforce our knowledge of him but a description of two or three which might apply equally well to a very large number of modern works, we are left strangely unsatisfied. The more so in that Mr. Maugham takes extraordinary pains in explaining to us that Strickland is no imaginary character. His paintings are known everywhere, everywhere acclaimed. Books have been written about him in English and French and German. He even goes so far as to give us the authors' and the publishers' names—well-known live publishers who would surely never allow their names to be taken in vain. So it comes to this. If Strickland is a real man and this book a sort of guide to his works, it has its value; but if Mr. Maugham is merely pulling our critical leg it will not do. Then, we are not told enough. We must be shown something of the workings of his mind; we must have some comment of his upon what he feels, fuller and more exhaustive than his perpetual: "Go to hell." It is simply essential that there should be some quality in him revealed to us that we may love, something that will stop us for ever from crying: "If you have to be so odious before you can paint bananas—pray leave them unpainted."

Here are the facts. Charles Strickland, a middle-aged stockbroker, the husband of a charming cultured woman and the father of two typically nice English children, suddenly, on a day, without a hint of warning, leaves his home and business and goes off to Paris to paint. The reason is unthinkable. A sturdy, ruddy middle-aged man cannot so utterly change his nature. He can; he does. Living in poverty, great untidiness and discomfort, he renounces his old life and seemingly never gives it another thought. For the moment he sheds that respectable envelope and is away, it is no longer part of his new self. He is grown out of its roundness and firmness and is become a lean pale creature with a great red beard, a hooked nose and thick sensual lips, possessed with one passion, ravaged by one desire—to paint great pictures. Paris he accepts as though he had always known it. He lives the life of its disreputable quarters as though he had been brought up in them and adopts its ugly ways with a kind of fiendish glee. Then he is discovered, half dead of a fever, by a stupid kind-hearted little Dutchman who takes him into his flat and nurses him. The adored gentle wife of the Dutchman falls under Strickland's spell and ruins her life for him. When he is sick of her (for his contempt for women is fathomless) she takes poison and dies. And Strickland, his sexual appetite satisfied, "smiles dryly and pulls his beard."

Finally, he leaves Paris and makes his home in Tahiti. Here he goes native, living in a remote hut with a black woman and her relatives, and painting masterpieces until

his body takes its great and final revenge upon his spirit and he becomes a leper. He lives for years, painting the walls of his house. When he is dying he makes his black wife promise to burn the house down so that the pictures may be destroyed. "His life was complete. He had made a world and saw that it was good. Then, in pride and contempt, he destroyed it."

This strange story is related by a friend of Mrs. Strickland's, a young, rather priggish author, who is sent over to Paris after the first tragedy to discover with whom Strickland has eloped and whether he can be induced to return.

"You won't go back to your wife?" I said at last.

"Never."

"... She'll never make you a single reproach."

"She can go to hell."

"You don't care if people think you an utter blackguard? You don't care if she and her children have to beg their bread?"

"Not a damn."

That is very typical of their conversations together. Indeed, the young man confesses that if Strickland is a great deal more articulate than that, he has put the words into his mouth—divined them from his gestures. "From his own conversation I was able to glean nothing." And "his real life consisted of dreams and of tremendously hard work." But where are the dreams? Strickland gives no hint of them; the young man makes no attempt to divine them. "He asked nothing from his fellows except that they should leave him alone. He was single-hearted in his aim, and to pursue it he was willing to sacrifice not only himself—many can do that—but others..." But what does the sacrifice matter if you do not care a rap whether the creature on the altar is a little horned ram or your only beloved son?

The one outstanding quality in Strickland's nature seems to have been his contempt for life and the ways of life. But contempt for life is not to be confused with liberty; nor can the man whose weapon it is fight a tragic battle; die a tragic death. If to be a great artist were to push over everything that comes in one's way, topple over the table, lunge out right and left like a drunken man in a café and send the pots flying, then Strickland was a great artist. But great artists are not drunken men; they are men who are divinely sober. They know that the moon can never be bought for sixpence, and that liberty is only a profound realization of the greatness of the dangers in their midst.

K. M.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

MR. W. J. LEIGHTON, the second part of whose stock is to be sold next week, was one of the foremost booksellers and book binders of his day. His illustrated catalogues, issued at intervals during the last fifteen years, were extremely valuable records of rare books, and the set of facsimiles he issued three years ago fills some gaps. He was especially interested in fine bindings, whether from the quality of the leather, the excellence and variety of the tooling, or the historical associations connected with them. The sale contains amongst others two fine blind-tooled bindings with the arms of Henry VIII. and perhaps from his library; a good modern copy of Byron in the florid style; a Theophylactus in London stamped binding with the royal arms, and many fifteenth-century books in their original boards. Collectors of incunabula will find many in this sale, quite a number of them not being Proctor, and a few still more interesting as being the earliest printed in their respective places of origin. The earliest offered in the sale is a *Propertius* printed in 1472 at Jesi. Admirers of English books will find an early Chaucer of 1532; first editions of "Queen Mab," 1813, and of "The Holy War," 1682; a rare *Marr Marprelate tract*, a number of Royal Proclamations, Amadis Greece and King Arthur, and half a dozen other rare romances. Several modern presses like the Doves and Ashendene are represented. There is a full set of Drayton; a fine copy of Henry VIII. "Assertio Septem Sacramentorum," which belonged to his chaplain and half a dozen Horæ, one being of the greatest rarity. A copy of *Grose's rare tract* (three only printed) is in the British Museum. A still rarer book is Sir Walter Scott's first published work, "Götz of Berlichingen." The chief interest of the sale, however, lies in the number of fine incunabula offered, and it will be of interest to note how far the demand for them is increasing.

articulate than that, he has put the words into his mouth—divined them from his gestures. 'From his own conversation I was able to glean nothing.' And 'his real life consisted of dreams and of tremendously hard work.' But where are the dreams? Strickland gives no hint of them; the young man makes no attempt to divine them. 'He asked nothing from his fellows except that they should leave him alone. He was single-hearted in his aim, and to pursue it he was willing to sacrifice not only himself—many can do that—but others....' But what does the sacrifice matter if you do not care a rap whether the creature on the altar is a little horned ram or your only beloved son?

The one outstanding quality in Strickland's nature seems to have been his contempt for life and the ways of life. But contempt for life is not to be confused with liberty, nor can the man whose weapon it is fight a tragic battle or die a tragic death. If to be a great artist were to push over everything that comes in one's way, topple over the table, lunge out right and left like a drunken man in a café and send the pots flying, then Strickland was a great artist. But great artists are not drunken men; they are men who are divinely sober. They know that the moon can never be bought for sixpence, and that liberty is only a profound realization of the greatness of the dangers in their midst.

44. Unsigned review, 'The Primitive Man', *Saturday Review* (London)

CXXVII, 17 May 1919, 481-2

This book is so purely a study in psychology that we doubt whether it deserves to be classed as a novel. Of plot, incident, or love, there is none, and the psychological problem is not new; it is the analysis of the naked soul of the barbarous or natural man. The question which Mr Maugham asks and answers in these pages is how would the primitive man, who acknowledges no obligation to

God or man or woman, who accepts no creed or code of ethics, bear himself to his fellows in his passage through life? The subject, as we said, is familiar, but Mr Maugham handles it in a novel way, because as a rule the savage in fiction is afraid of his fellow men's opinion or the police; he requires the invisible cap to do himself justice. The perfect ruffian in polite society we have long known under the names of Barry Lyndon, Lord Monmouth and Lord Steyne, and there were Jekyll and Hyde. But Charles Strickland, the artist, does really not care what other people say or think of him. By the way, Mr Maugham must have written this book before the war, when the words 'go to hell' were capable of thrilling suburbia, and were not, as to-day, what lawyers call 'common form,' as commonplace and jejune as 'rotten' or 'ripping.' When you asked Charles Strickland to dine with you, he answered, 'Go to hell'; when you offered him medicine on the sick-bed he replied, 'Go to hell'; when you inquired his opinion of a picture or whether he would like a game of chess, his monotonous formula was, 'Go to hell.' Mr Maugham admits that his genius was deficient in the art of expression in words: he was rather wearisomely so. Charles Strickland lived till the age of forty in a flat off Victoria Street, as a stockbroker, with a wife and son and daughter, secretly going out at night, as he approached the *cap de quarantaine*, to attend classes in drawing and painting. Suddenly he decamped to Paris and took to the life of the poor genius artist. When Mr Maugham, a callow youth and the friend of the wife (we mean, of course, the 'I' of the book), followed him to Paris and asked him why he had deserted wife and children, his answer, after many 'Go to hells,' was that he had supported them in comfort for seventeen years, and it was time they supported themselves, or if they couldn't do it, they had relations who could. For himself, London bored him and he *must* paint, and paint he does, without selling, pictures which after his death are fought for as masterpieces by dealers and collectors. We must here observe that if Mr Maugham is bent on analysing the genius whose art forces him to break with society, it is unlikely, if not impossible, that he could have suppressed himself until forty. Painting like poetry breaks out early, and though we do not say (not knowing) that all painters do their best work before forty, as all poets certainly do, we are sceptical about the crypto-Monct living the stockbroker's life till that age.

Artistically, Mr Maugham exaggerates his effects. His primitive man is too much of a brute to be true to nature. Strickland is rescued dying from his gaffret by a Dutch painter and his wife, who instal him in their studio and nurse him to health. The dirty diseased genius inspires the wife with a horrible animal passion, which he catches, and the two turn the husband out of his studio. When Strickland has satisfied his lust, he deserts the woman, who commits suicide. This is *Sadisme* with a vengeance. The life of a beach-comber in the purlieus of Marseilles is very well described, but the best part of the book, to our taste, is the life in the South Sea Island, a subject which it seems impossible for travellers and novelists to stale. Strickland drifts out to Tahiti, and paints, and retires with a native girl to a bungalow in the woods, where he dies of leprosy, a death described with all the knowledge of St Thomas's. Clever Mr Maugham has not written popular plays without learning the trick of a good curtain. We suppose the meaning of the title to be that they who try to realise impossible ideals get sixpence for their trouble. The artist tried to live for his brush and canvas alone, and to leave the world an image of the truth. Mr Maugham tells us the price he had to pay: but he might have tried for the moon, surely, without being a beastly lunatic.

45. Maxwell Anderson, 'In Vishnu-Land What Avatar?' *Dial*

LXVII, 29 November 1919, 477-8

Maxwell Anderson (1888-1959) was a prolific American verse playwright whose most famous play, *Winterset* (1935), was suggested by the Sacco-Vanzetti case.

The title of *The Moon and Sixpence* is an admission and a defense—an admission by Somerset Maugham that explaining genius is as impossible as expressing moonlight in terms of the

decimal system, and a defense of his method against such critics as will assuredly accuse him of failing in a task he never attempted. He has no illusions about cutting his green cheese to a super-mundane thinness. He gives us, flatly and baldly, the external aspect of the evolution of genius, not bothered in the least by the fact that what happens in his narrative is neither explicable nor probable. He merely sees to it that it happens and that we are convinced. His task was to present an extraordinary phenomenon as it appeared to the ordinary folk of the social vicinity in which it occurred. It is his theory that this is what we can understand, and truly this is what most concerns us. When a whirlwind sweeps the dozing harbor, we take no interest in the scientific explanations of the weather bureau, but pick our way down to the littered beach to view the wreckage and gossip about the losses. It was a whirlwind of overmastering creative desire that caught up Charles Strickland, tore him from his wife, ruined the lives of Stroeve and Blanche, and upset innumerable tidy schemes. Society saw nothing but a most deplorable confusion; Strickland was aware of nothing save an essential freedom.

At the age of forty, Strickland was a heavy-featured monosyllabic stock-broker with an intellectual wife who went in for literary lions. Mrs Strickland remembered vaguely that he had dabbled a bit with paints when they were first married, but he had painted very badly and the family seemed to have laughed him out of it. The facts of his life were dull and usual. As a boy fresh from school he 'went into a broker's office without any feeling of distaste. Until he married, he led the ordinary life of his fellows, gambling mildly on the Exchange, interested to the extent of a sovereign or two on the result of the Derby or the Oxford and Cambridge Race. I think he boxed a little in his spare time. On his chimney-piece he had photographs of Mrs Langtry and Mary Anderson. He read *Punch* and the *Sporting Times*. He went to dances in Hampstead.' He was equally usual as a husband—kindly, affable, undemonstrative, no doubt, but also thoroughly sane and respectable. Then unexpectedly he departed for Paris, leaving no word save a brief note to his wife, stating that he would never come back. His wife and her relatives assumed a woman in the case. In the words of Maugham, 'whenever a man does anything unexpected, his fellows ascribe it to the most discreditable motives.' But the friend who looks him up to reason with him finds no woman, but a bearded, shabby,

it is particularly useful to study the roots from which sprang modern Socialism. The period was, as Mr. Tawney rightly points out, one in which the theory and practice of the anti-thesis of Socialism triumphed, and it has received, from that point of view, "more attention in England than that of any other period." But "what has never been adequately written is the history of the political philosophy (of this period) which failed." The greater part of Mr. Beer's first volume is devoted to an account of that political philosophy which failed between 1800 and 1840, but which, under other forms and in other conditions, broke out again with overwhelming strength in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In the ferment of the earlier period can be traced almost all the fundamental ideas of the later co-operative, trades union, socialist, and revolutionary movements. The idea of a political Labor Party appears in 1831, the theory and practice of the general strike in 1834, even the Soviet idea is distinctly heard in 1833, when the "Crisis" wrote: "The only House of Commons is a House of Trades, and that is only just beginning to be formed. We shall have a new set of boroughs when the unions are organized: every trade shall be a borough, and every trade shall have a council of representatives to conduct its affairs. . . . The elements are gathering. The character of the Reformed Parliament is now blasted, and, like the character of a woman when lost, is not easily recovered. It will be substituted by a House of Trades."

We have said enough to show the scope of Mr. Beer's book. It could not have been written except by a man of immensely wide reading and learning. And Mr. Beer has the rare gift of being able to place his knowledge at the disposal of his reader. As a study of the birth of Socialism his first volume is invaluable.

"A WANDERING FANATIC."

"On the Edge of the World." By EDMUND CANDLER. (Cassell. 10s. 6d.)

EARLY in the days of the Mesopotamia campaign a description by an "Eye-Witness" (published by some papers, and rejected by others to make room for a great speech by the latest Man who was Winning the War) of a scene in the Garden of Eden, where he tethered his boat to the Tree of Knowledge, brought to those who care for good writing the news that there really was an official correspondent—even though appointed to a subsidiary campaign—who had eyes for positive and direct observation, and personality, and a tender conscience when using English. Subsequent despatches from Mr. Candler confirmed this, though the Censor did not permit the author of "The Long Road to Baghdad" to indulge his gifts fully till the fighting was ended. It might be thought that Mr. Candler, being in a land golden with romance and tradition, was specially favored; but after reading "On the Edge of the World" we have not any doubt that he could tell a fascinating story if he had nothing but an old frying-pan for a subject. He takes us with him among great mountains away from the track of tourists, on pilgrimages with strange people to a sacred lake and a sacred cave; but what matters is the spirit of the guide. Any journey is an adventure to the born traveller, the true vagabond, whether it be to the mountains of Kashmir or the tors of Devon. Indeed, it was while we were limping with Mr. Candler round the great mountain of Nanga Parbat, our boots worn to ribbons, that he, without warning, suddenly transported us to a place we know—Oh! vanished days!—near Okehampton. It was owing to our guide being overcome by a wave of homesickness at the sight of his own sorry boots. He had bought them ready-made two years before when walking on Dartmoor.

"It was a misty day, he writes. The low veiled hills looked immense, but in the evening the sun broke through the clouds and lit up the heather, and the uncompromising grey and brown became a rosy-colored wilderness. We lay in an old stone-circle, built by pre-historic men for the orientation of some star, and watched it set limned against Yes Tor. I had never felt so near earth, such a sense of the oldness of the world. It was a kind of mellow happiness in old inheritance, a thankfulness in every pore for this rock and heath and scrub and pasture, and for one's part in the soil. One could pray for another incarnation under the same soft sky, to be borne here again in an

eddy of the same life-wave which brought the Celt and stone-age man. The feeling was homely and physical; it was of the bone and blood, not of the mind. Asia cannot inspire it."

In a few words Mr. Candler transports you from that charmed circle in the bracken to the perilous slopes of Nanga Parbat; and, wherever his fancy directs you, there you are richer for a real experience. Mr. Candler appears to have been everywhere. His memory is crowded with pictures of beauty and wonder. Constantly the changing view brings to his mind something of splendor he once encountered in Asia, or Europe, in a village inn, or in a book. He is to be envied such a haunted mind. Henry James has confessed that he went through life gathering impressions. It was a hint of a kind of professionalism not altogether pleasing. But Mr. Candler has not packed his mind with picture postcards, like the pocket-book of an American tourist. When his memory is stirred the thing recalled is always apt and always welcome. Though it will never be our blessed fortune to tread the earth of Kashmir its map will never be the same again. We had heard that Nanga Parbat is one of the highest peaks in the world, and we did not care. Mr. Candler tells us that—

"The rare and exquisite beauty of it lies in the suggestion of something unearthly and remote. On clear mornings, and at sunset after rain, she is seen across the valley of Kashmir a wraith-like vision hanging between earth and sky, her base hidden in clouds remote from the pedestrian ranges at her feet. . . . When I watched the rose, the opal, the amber lights of dawn dissolving in the mists that covered the intervening ranges, and saw the head of Nanga floating in the air far away and ethereal, I was ill at ease until I had started on the road with my tent and baggage. I had never seen a peak that draws one so irresistibly towards it."

Mr. Candler mixed with pilgrims going to the sacred lake of Gangabal and to the sacred cave of Amarnath, in a wild and remote country which gave him the sense of coming to the end of the created world. It is easy to believe that he never sees an Asiatic pilgrim without wondering if he may not be afoot just for the pilgrimage. "A wandering fanatic" is his own description of himself. He has a strain of the gipsy. Fortunately, he is able to gratify his bent for wayfaring and contact with the things he loves, rivers and mountains and flowers—how often the familiar names of the flowers of English lanes and meadows come into these tales of Kashmir!—and the rare pagans like himself whom he meets in his wanderings.

THE MODERN ARTIST.

"The Moon and Sixpence: A Novel." By W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM. (Heinemann. 7s. net.)

It is interesting to take Mr. Maugham's new novel by itself, not because it is a remarkable book, but a sort of literary portmanteau of a remarkable modern obsession. This is the story. Charles Strickland is a respectable stockbroker (so far as society makes that possible) of about forty, with wife and children. He is entirely commonplace, and the narrator of the tale finds him as much like any other stockbroker as one china ornament in a seaside lodging-house is like another. But beneath the tranquil surface of the lake is Grendel's cave. Strickland is a genius, a great painter *manqué*, and suddenly what Mr. Maugham calls "the spirit of God" catches him by the hair. So he deserts his wife and children and runs away to Paris, where he lives solitary in a garret, starving and painting. When he is urged at last to negotiate with his wife, he writes: "God damn my wife. She is an excellent woman. I wish she was in hell." Such is the austerity of the artistic genius. Strickland's genius indeed is so very austere that flesh and blood will not tolerate it, and we find him breaking out into wild and brutal fits of sensuality, in which the coarser the instrument, the happier is Strickland's outraged flesh and blood. Finally, he falls ill, and is nursed back to life by an artist acquaintance and his wife in their own home. Being too weak to paint, Strickland occupies himself in seducing the wife and turning the artist out of his own house. He soon gets tired of Mrs. Stroeve, and she poisons herself. Strickland takes himself off to Marseilles, where he knocks about in gambling hells and brothels, until he gets a job on a ship bound for Tahiti. There he paints his finest master-

pieces, beats his native "wife" black and blue, and finally dies of leprosy in the bush. Such is the exciting career of the illustrious Strickland. Mr. Maugham is, unfortunately, reticent about the quality of the pictures painted by the great man—"Strickland was an odious man, but I still think he was a great one"—but we do find a description of the paintings which the doctor who tended him found in his hut:—

"It was tremendous, sensual, passionate; and yet there was something horrible there too, something which made him afraid. It was the work of a man who had delved into the hidden depths of nature and had discovered secrets which were beautiful and fearful too. It was the work of a man who knew things which it is unholy for men to know. There was something primeval there and terrible. It was not human. It brought to his mind vague recollections of black magic. It was beautiful and obscene."

"*Mon Dieu*, this is genius," decides the doctor. Something, too, we learn of Strickland's novel color schemes:—

"There were purples, horrible like raw and putrid flesh, and yet with a glowing, sensual passion that called up vague memories of the Roman Empire of Heliogabalus; . . . there were deep yellows that died with an unnatural passion into a green as fragrant as the Spring and as pure as the sparkling water of a mountain brook. . . . All that was healthy or natural, all that clung to happy relationships and the simple joys of simple men, shrunk from them (the colors of Strickland's mangoes, bananas and oranges) in dismay; and yet a fearful attraction was in them, and like the fruit on the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they were terrible with the possibilities of the Unknown."

It would have been worth while treasuring some of the conversation and opinions of a man who could make an orange die with an unnatural passion into green. What did he think of Landseer, and in what terms would he have described the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Browning? Alas! Strickland's talk can be gathered into ten pages, its purport and refrain into three monosyllables—"go to hell," an expression which he applies with sovereign impartiality to all who have the privilege of meeting or living with him—wives, mistresses, prostitutes, friends, foes, critics, admirers, thieves, waiters, nurses, and dealers.

Mr. Maugham's object—if he has one—is to make Strickland detestable, an artistic Jonathan Wild, a Heathcliffe with a palette but without his love. What he really makes him is preposterous and grotesque, so far as a spook can be adjectival at all. We will not fasten on to Mr. Maugham the absurdity of some theory or other that genius works in this way. Unfortunately, there are still quite a number of people who do so think, so strongly does the prudish-purient Victorian convention persist that genius and art are rather attractively improper, and that a genius is justified in turning other people's happiness into misery and love into hate, so long as he contrives to turn yellow into green. If there were any truth in this conception, the sooner that we regard and treat genius as a form of human rabies the better. But we may leave these diseased fantasies alone, and ask ourselves again: What is Mr. Maugham driving at? If his purpose has been a lightning sketch of a blackguard who daubs, he has simply failed. Strickland never lives and breathes through half a page. If he has attempted a pathological study of perverted greatness, any wretched little pseudo-artist, who seduces his friend's wife and deserts both her and his own, can lay claim to the like. We imagine that genius sees too much of the devil in this world to relish employment under him. What we feel we should like to ask Mr. Maugham is: Why drag art into it? Why not have let Strickland stay stockbroker and develop into one of those Napoleons of Finance, dear to the fancy of a certain school of American novelists? There actually are such beings, and it is not necessary to make them paint or write in order to prove that they are geniuses.

BOOKS IN BRIEF.

"Co-Operation for Farmers." By LIONEL SMITH-GORDON. (Williams & Norgate. 6s.)

MR. LIONEL SMITH-GORDON writes not only for the agriculturist, but for the co-operator generally. There are larger volumes on the subject than this, but they would be better if they were as lucid. The author, who is librarian of the Co-operative Reference Library, Dublin, describes what he has learned in practice of the benefits of co-operation in

agriculture and the means of increasing those benefits. His volume is a history of the movement and a guide to those who wish to start co-operative societies. Knowing the dangers of co-operative movements where the principles of co-operation are absent, he puts in a needed word for the "doctrinaire." Time after time a departure from the rules has opened the door to capitalists who have turned societies into joint stock companies while still retaining the title of co-operative. He is not unmindful of the apathy of members, whose minds are attracted mainly by dividends, banishing spirit and ideal. The applicableness of co-operation to agriculture is sufficiently proved already in every country in Europe. The American farmer was late in starting, but he has achieved striking success in co-operative marketing. Mr. Smith-Gordon pleads with co-operators not to think of agricultural production and industrial production in different categories. A better division is co-operation for production and co-operation for distribution; otherwise rivalries and competition arise. The author formulates a theory of distribution, which should be studied by all who are interested in the co-operative control of industry.

The Week in the City.

THE Stock Exchange has had a dull, not to say a heavy, week, and there has been a marked decline in Consols, which fell below 55 on Wednesday, but rallied afterwards and recovered to 55½ on Thursday. It is not so long since they were at 63, and at the price they look very cheap in comparison with the French Loans; for, of course, there is no prospect at all of French revenue from taxation meeting the necessary expenditure plus the interest on the debt. News from abroad has not been encouraging. British soldiers are fighting in Afghanistan, in Russia, and in various other distant countries at a cost which the War Office has refused to estimate. In spite of this, there has been during the last month a large reduction in public expenditure, and last week the floating debt was actually reducing by over eight millions. The Stock Exchange is expecting a new loan for the purpose of funding short term obligations and meeting the Chancellor's estimated deficit. The financiers are, of course, anxious to get the best possible terms, and this may explain the weakness of Consols and other gilt-edged securities. Money has been if anything more usable, and 3 per cent. has been freely paid for short loans. Activity in oil shares continues, but those who know about intrinsic values predict a very severe slump when the big operators begin to unload on the public. Canadian securities have been depressed by the outburst of Bolshevism or Sovietism in Winnipeg, and its extension to other parts of the Dominion. Thursday's Bank Return was unsatisfactory with another decline in the Reserve.

ARGENTINE RAILWAYS.

The ordinary stocks of the leading railways of Argentina have recently enjoyed a considerable rise. This is partially explained in some of the cases by the traffic figures, which, on the whole, make a very good show, the case of the Central Argentine being a conspicuous exception. But the rise is more attributable to other causes. Higher freights have been conceded in the case of two lines. Labor conditions are reported to be very much more peaceful; crops are abundant, and the fuel difficulty appears, if anything, to be rather better owing to prolonged experiments with oil. Another factor is the pending visit of railway officials from London to look into the affairs of the railways on the spot. Certainly the chief factors in the situation are more hopeful than for some time past.

TWO TEXTILE REPORTS.

Two leading textile concerns have published their reports recently, namely, the British Cotton and Wool Dyers' Association, better known in market circles as the "Slubbers," and the Fine Cotton Spinners and Doublers' Association. Both are satisfactory, the latter especially having had a good year. Slubbers' gross profits for 1918-19 were nearly £13,000 better at £240,719, but, renewals and general expenses being heavier, net profits were about £2,700 lower at £135,154. The 10 per cent. dividend was maintained, reserve and depreciation allowances the same as a year ago, and the balance to next year is £5,600 less, at £40,259. The Fine Cotton Spinners' gross profits for the year ended March 31st, 1919, were £893,659, against £701,132 in the previous year. In 1917-18, provision against depreciation of investments absorbed £125,000, while this year £100,000 is placed to "reserve for contingencies," obviously a wise precaution in view of the unsettled state of the world. Debenture interest claims £110,000 as before, and other funds £100,000 against £35,000 a year ago. The net result of those allocations, after bringing in the sum brought forward, is a distributable balance of £736,690, against £561,930. Of this the directors propose to allot a further £100,000 to reserve, and, after payment of the preference and preferred dividends at the ordinary rate, to give the ordinary shareholders a bonus of 2 per cent. over and above the 10 per cent. dividend. The carry forward is increased by £17,000.

LUCELLUM.

expressionless veiled phantom who wanders here and there in a desultory manner, to loll against pillars and play the part of a muted shadow in a way that in the old days would have roused the derision of the pit. We have better manners now, at least, in the cheaper theatrical seats; but it will need talent as well as restraint on the part of the actress to get this "Joy" across the footlights. Tytyl finds himself unable to make his choice from among these damsels; and so he must go seek the counsel first of his ancestors, and afterwards of his descendants. For some unexplained reason Bérylure decides that he must have money, so he pays a visit to a miser in his cell, the obliging fairy opening the door by using her wand, which five minutes earlier she had declared was being repaired at the centre of the earth—a very careless inconsistency. Then on to Bérylure's palace, through a region of rocks to the Abode of the Ancestors, *via* the Milky Way (how to get *that* within this wooden O) to the Abode of the Children; and so home to the cottage bedroom and the Blue Bird. Throughout this Pilgrimage, under the guidance of Light—who often talks, as indeed does Bérylure also, rather like the Rev. Dr. Barlow—Tytyl and the girls are dogged by Destiny; at first a monstrous shape, granite and awful, with a grip of bronze and a voice portentous, to decrease in everything but self-assertion, until at last he is a puking child in an overwhelming cloak and sombrero, mumbling large words in lisping infantese. It is this richly comic character of Destiny that defeats whatever allegorical *posé* Maeterlinck might have had. Here we are shown him as a force that threatens, and in the end is bankrupt nothing; yet it is destiny and nothing else that actually rules Tytyl's choice. No decision proves possible because the Veiled Figure, the future mother, is an unread mystery, and then the youngest of the unborn children, to be the eldest of the children born, speaks for himself, utters the word, makes the choice, claims his mother. It is, in fact, Destiny that decides, although we are shown the comic Destiny futile and like a modern politician or the Duke of Plaza-Toro leading his followers from behind.

It would, however, be completely absurd to dwell at full length on the futility of the allegory as if that were the measure of the play; for "The Betrothed" is charming, amusing, and pleasantly gives to thought. It has the same familiar humour as "The Blue Bird," and because it invades these mean and nasty times with the enchantment of fancy, colour, and quaintness of humour, it is as welcome as the sight of the daffodils swaying in the wind of a March morning. The language of this English version is colloquial in the British manner. Fairy, Light, the Prehistoric; all the people, mortal or metaphysical, talk in the idiom of Brixton; and we miss the poetry that would have rightly set the occasional charm of the thought.

C. E. LAWRENCE.

A STUDY IN SEPIA.*

In one of Mr. Maugham's plays the hero towards the end exclaims in a fit of petulance: "I held up an ideal and they sneered at me. In this world you must wallow with the rest of them." Petulance is a poor war-substitute for vivacity and wit, and it certainly is not absent from this book. It has something in common with his first novel, "Liza of Lambeth," much of its realism, and something of its power, developed to a maturity which is expressed in the writing if it is not always perceptible in the tone. Too often it gives one the feeling the narrator confesses receiving from the descriptions of Marseilles and its underworld—"I received the impression of a life intense and brutal, savage, multi-coloured, and vivacious." For all these phases pass and re-pass with dazzling rapidity in this story of the misanthropic freak, Charles Strickland.

Strickland, a stockbroker in a comfortable way, rejoices in a charming wife and family, or perhaps it would be truer

* "The Moon and Sixpence." By W. Somerset Maugham. 7s. net. (Heinemann.)

to say that they rejoice in him and the sheltering income he provides. The household atmosphere is drawn as near normal mediocrity as a rather jerky and cynical narrative can go, except that the chatelaine has wit as well as warmth, and basks in a happiness which is largely of her own creation—the better to set off her misery when her house of cards collapses. For this commonplace and inartistic spouse of hers deserts her and clears off to Paris, for reasons which scandal cannot recognise or recall by precedent, so it fills in what motives it likes. Here, however, Strickland sustains injury—the only injustice he can complain of in a career which consists mainly in the cruelties he inflicts on other people. He answers all reproaches and appeals with obscenity, robs a benevolent neighbour of his wife, and accepts her suicide as all part of the decreed order of things. He leaves France for Tahiti, takes his pleasure as he finds it, and is nursed to the last in blindness and leprosy by a native woman who has borne him a son and carries out his last request by burning their hut down, decorations and all. Here, in a word, is the only motive the author supplies in this cul-de-sac of teasing realism. Strickland, in accordance with his unaccountable nature, has suddenly dedicated himself to painting, and art is the drug that consumes him. Mr. Maugham paints the painter's portrait in masterly words, but we can no more accept Strickland's art than we can his break-away. It is a study of freakishness, told with a caustic cleverness of phrase, and a cold impartiality of outlook that is studied to a hair. As an essay in fiction with a biographic camouflage, it is a masterpiece in its way, but its human interest is thin.

J. P. C.

SIR ORACLE AND LADY SENSE.*

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THE FOOL OF THE FAMILY

Something of the irresponsibility of the Sanger family seems to have got into Miss Margaret Kennedy in writing her new novel, in which two of that indestructible tribe figure. Caryl Sanger, the eldest son of the genus, was *THE FOOL OF THE FAMILY* (Heinemann, 7s. 6d. net), musical of course but not sufficiently talented to do anything much with it, and without the special charm that took most of his brothers and sisters so gaily through life. Moreover, the others victimized him:—

For Caryl's family, whenever they chanced to come across him, always managed to upset his apple-cart. Quite amiably, quite unintentionally, they upset it. They could not help doing so. Their habits, their morals, their whole mode of life was so very different from his that he could not venture into their latitudes without running grave risk of shipwreck. For he was patient and plodding while they were mercuric. He instinctively obeyed laws; they instinctively defied them. They rode the breakers of life, like surf-riders, trusting in the frail craft of their wits and their impudence, while he, good honest seaman, foundered, with his all too-solid equipment.

He fell in love with Fenella McLean, a Scots girl whom he met in Venice. He was playing the piano in a cinema and she was living in a palace, but none the less they believed in no barriers. And then his young brother Sebastian, who was also living in Venice, got mixed up with the affair; and the Scottish couple wafted their only child away to Austria. Sebastian had both charm and genius, and he lived a raffish life; but when he wandered with his marionette show into Fenella's neighbourhood—Caryl being one of his troupe—the unstable girl fell deeply in love with him. Then she veered about from one to the other, scarcely knowing which of the brothers she wished to marry, but committing herself all too deeply with Sebastian. Fenella, sad to say, is a paper doll, flat, light, fluttering, pretty, but never for an instant alive or endowed with any human quality. Miss Kennedy has treated her irresponsibly, but she has made Gemma, who lives with Sebastian, a living though conventional figure. Conventional in the usual sense Gemma is not; but her gay vagabondishness and her careless but profound maternal feeling are not so uncommon in fiction as they used to be.

The setting for all these figures is so excellent, the background, whether abroad or at home, is so admirably done, that the comparative failure of the leading two women characters matters much less than one might suppose. There is vivacity and ease in the telling of the story, and some thrilling pages of Fascist adventure. Caryl and Sebastian Sanger are a delightful pair, endowed with the Sanger carelessness and fun, drifters who are capable of concentration and gifted with clear brains. Sebastian takes lightly what he lightly values, inhuman as genius must be. His music matters to him more than any flesh and blood ties can do. In the end, possibly, the fool of the family gets the reward his faithful heart desires; but we are not allowed to be too sure of this.

CAKES AND ALE

If ever there was a novel which a novelist wrote to amuse himself it is *CAKES AND ALE* (Heinemann, 7s. 6d. net), by Mr. Somerset Maugham. It is a story narrated in the first person by a novelist about another novelist whose life a third novelist had been asked to write by the second wife of the second novelist. Edward Driffield, who had lately died, had past his eightieth year, had received the O.M. and been more or less canonized as the grand old man of English letters. This honourable result, according to the sardonic Ashenden, the narrator, had been chiefly due to his longevity and the trouble which Mrs. Barton Trafford took to "make" him after his first wife ran away to America with a Kentish coal-merchant, her first of many lovers. The second Mrs. Driffield was a hospital nurse who married him late in life, and carried on Mrs. Trafford's good work in making her husband respectable by degrees.

The result of these attentions is beautifully described in the scene where a smart hostess takes a duchess, a novel-writing peer and Ashenden over to lunch with the Driffields shortly before Driffield's death. The whole house and the whole proceeding are perfectly got up in the right note, with the second Mrs. Driffield as stage-manager. But she did not see old Edward Driffield's wink at Ashenden. In that wink lies the whole sting of the book. For Willic Ashenden had first known Ted Driffield as a boy, had learned from him to bicycle, and had later been a constant member of the Bohemian Driffield household in London, when Rosie Driffield, once a barmaid at Blackstable, had been at the height of her beauty. And Rosie had been his mistress—the scene is described briefly, brilliantly, with just that touch of spade-calling that here, as elsewhere in certain sly remarks, betrays what Mr. Somerset is up to—as she had been to every man she ever liked, such was her simplicity. So naturally Alroy Kear turned to Willie Ashenden for a few details about Driffield's early days, that he might treat them with a manly delicacy in that biography, his own anticipatory description of which is a little jewel of irony. But Alroy Kear is as much a part of the novel as Driffield. The portrait of him in the first chapter is as wicked as anything in the book, for he is a man who has reached eminence by his extraordinary talent for doing and saying the right thing for his own reputation. Ashenden pulls his leg gently when he meets him, telling the reader meanwhile the all too much for Kear's purposes that he knew about Ted and Rosie Driffield, and revealing at the end his last glimpse of Rosie, aged seventy, in America and the truth she told him about the way she spent the night on which her child died from meningitis. Driffield had guessed, and had given himself the only consolation that a novelist has, that of writing

was what she and the man she loved best, because he was "such a perfect gentleman" had been, in cold truth, a perfect bouncer. Ashenden did not mind, for he was not going to tell Kear, of whom he thought considerably less than of Driffield.

But Ashenden is a bad fellow. He interrupts his story with wicked meditations upon such matters as what Americans are thinking about while they are talking in hackneyed phrases, or how sadly frayed is the ideal of beauty to which *The Literary Supplement* in its leading article on Driffield laid such lovely stress, or how great a literary merit is longevity and how universally recognized, or the advisability of leaving all the future production of literature to the peerage—journalism for barons and poetry for dukes—or the difficulty of learning anything valuable about novel-writing from Messrs. Percy Lubbock, E. M. Forster and Mr. Edwin Muir.

GRAND HOTEL

The novel by Vicki Baum, *MENSCHEN IM HOTEL*, has been rendered into such fluent and idiomatic English by Mr. Basil Creighton that he must be credited with some sufficient motive for entitling his version of it, *GRAND HOTEL* (Bles, 7s. 6d. net)—a name which fails to indicate the author's primary concern with humanity. The hotel is the scene; the subject the people who pass through its revolving door. These people do things which are odd in not being normal to their age or station, and things which are reprehensible by accepted standards of morality; but the appeal they make has nothing in it of the superficial curiosity excited by the eccentric and unconventional. For Frau Baum has the art and charity to make their actions the effect of circumstances, and as such the revelation of impulses and longings common to humanity. English writers are mostly self-conscious and dehaunt—with lamentably estranging effect—when they campaign against sentimentality or discuss sexual relations. This German writer ignores conventional morality without arraigning it; exhibits sentimentality as being the potent influence we know it to be without either identifying herself with it or flouting it; and represents the satisfaction of normal sexual appetites as being something too natural to men and women to call for exculpation, concealment or prurient innuendo. We get our first idea of the people from hearing what is said of them by the hall porter and the staff of the hotel, and find it subtly conveyed later that all are asking something of life and asking in vain. Gruninskaya, an irritable Russian dancer, no longer as young as when an arch-duke gave her the diamond necklace she wears on the stage; a handsome young baron, a little too gracious to all and sundry—can he have an eye on the necklace—a shabby, sickly clerk—what is he doing in what is apparently the best hotel in Berlin?—the clerk's employer Preysing, head of a sound manufacturing firm—in the hotel for the discussion of a contract—not likely to be interested in anything but his family and his business; the pretty girl, Flämmchen, who comes to type for him or to do whatever else is asked of her. Is she thus complaisant because she wants money to support her ailing mother? No, to buy pretty clothes! And yet she is so naturally responsive—such a simple, honest girl according to her lights that it will not occur to the most censorious reader to sit in judgment on her. So with Preysing—an honest man, baited into an act of dishonesty; a good husband and father, tempted into just one more extra-matrimonial adventure; as utterly and inevitably blasted through an unpremeditated indiscretion as a man might be if he looked for a gas leak with a naked light. But Frau Baum's chief feat is in making her wicked nobleman intelligible and sympathetic while admitting that he is not only a cat-burglar but also a card-sharper; he is so genuinely considerate in his manners, this unrepentant crook of a baron!

Of the visitors to the hotel, "not one as he goes out through the revolving door is the same as when he went in," so Frau Baum tells us when she has finished with them; all too many writers might say that much of their people; with hers the change has been brought about not from without but through their contact with one another.

BELSHAZZAR

This posthumous romance of Sir Rider Haggard's, *BELSHAZZAR* (Stanley Paul, 7s. 6d. net), is, in form, the autobiography of an Egyptian, named Ramose, who at the period when he begins his tale is a young guardsman at the Court of the Pharaoh-Hophra of Jeremiah. We are to suppose that in a battle against Syrians a child named Myra falls into his chivalrous hands, and that it turns out in the sequel that she is the granddaughter of Zedekiah. Her parentage comes to the knowledge of the new King of Egypt, Amasis, about the time that Ramose realizes that he loves her—with the result that the girl is kidnapped on her wedding day and sent as a present to the King of Babylon, Nabonidus. As the King is old and amiable she might have been restored little the worse to Ramose, who has found his way to Babylon; but unfortunately she has taken the fancy of the King's son, Belshazzar; with the late entry of Belshazzar, who is by no means rehabilitated in reputation in the book, the stage is set for the struggle between him and Ramose for the person of Myra.

It cannot be claimed for the story that it is one of the author's best. Its movement is slow and uncertain. Perhaps Rider Haggard, having dedicated the book to "a student" of the age in which it is set, thought it only civil to write as a student himself and to give his proofs by dwelling on the relations of Pharaoh-Hophra and Amasis, on the purification of the brides of Eastern potentates, on Apis bulls and an historical earthquake in Cyprus, with particulars which are, no doubt, confirmed by

Ramose, though it are interwoven with it with the unabated dexterity of a practised writer. But with this insistence on historical fact Ramose has been denied romantic stature; it is about all he can do to kill a couple of common soldiers! Now Umslopagaas. . . .

This concession to probability is an inadequate substitute for the extravagance of Rider Haggard's early tales—an extravagance which his readers always accepted from him because he had a tacit understanding with them that it was extravagance. He used to provide a cynical commentator as a foil to his witch doctors to forestall the objector. There is no such cynic in Belshazzar—his witch doctor, one Belus, being too anaemic to need one. As one reads about Belus one imagines Rider Haggard depressed by the thought of what he could have done in this line with Daniel if good taste had not placed the prophet's methods beyond scrutiny.

NOT WITHOUT LAUGHTER

Mr. Langston Hughes, a negro poet of distinction, gives us in a first novel, *NOT WITHOUT LAUGHTER* (Knopf, 7s. 6d. net), a much quieter and more reflective study of the negro mind than any we have met in recent years. It is for the most part the story of a boy Sandy Rodgers, who lived with his grandmother, old Aunt Hager, in Stanton, a small town in Texas. Annjee, Sandy's mother, was a hard worker and a faithful, tender-hearted soul, grateful for small mercies. "Evening's the only time," she impressed upon the boy, "we niggers have to ourselves. Thank God for night . . . 'cause all day you gives to white folks." Sandy's father, Jimbo Rodgers, was a different type; a good-natured, careless, moony creature, who could not remain in one place for long and was constantly going off without warning to new jobs and places, and who pulled your heartstrings with the passion and the pathos of his singing of spirituals. It was a restless and troubled sort of household, with Aunt Hager and Annjee representing the Christians, Jimbo and Harriett, Aunt Hager's youngest daughter, representing the sinners, and Sandy wavering between the two as guided by his affections.

The boy is a charmingly drawn portrait, unexaggerated and full of character. When Annjee goes away to Detroit to join her roving husband, Sandy works for a time in a barber-shop, blacking boots with an observant and critical eye, and then forsakes the job for that of a bell-boy in an hotel. He has the usual sort of experiences of a negro boy working for the first time among white people; and one of the most impressive things in the book is the silent and youthfully deliberate fashion in which he accepts the situation. Much of the later part of the story is taken up with Harriett, whose pleasure-loving and reckless temperament lands her in one predicament after another, and who eventually runs away with a cheap negro travelling show, is abandoned and left penniless, goes on the streets, and finally achieves a measure of precarious success in vaudeville. Apart from Sandy, however, it is the figure of old Aunt Hager, drawn with admirable strength and tenderness, that dominates the story. A simple, selfless, indefatigable creature, who has never bowed her head to misfortune, she has her own inarticulate philosophy of the way of the world and the destiny of negro men and women. Her dreams for Sandy are what she treasures most of all; and it is the boy's determination not to disappoint her—the description of her death is simple and moving—which inspires his own dreams, in a stuffy little room in the great Black Belt of Chicago, of an ampler and freer kind of life than poverty and a dark skin ordinarily decide.

ELFWIN

A.D. 915-920 is not a well-known period in English history. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle gives three lines to Elfwín, and about four pages to her mother Ethelfleda, the "Lady of Mercia," and her uncle King Edward the Elder. So Mr. Fowler Wright has plenty of room to add fiction in his *ELFWIN* (Harrap, 7s. 6d. net). A curved line from Ribble to Thames mouth was then the approximate boundary between heathen Dane and Christian Saxon. The book begins with encroaching Danes and ends with triumphant Saxons. This is the background for Elfwín. She and her love-story fill half the picture. It was a love-story with few caresses. There was seldom time for any. Also Elfwín was the kind of young woman who will only allow caresses on special occasions. Despite the dark Celtic complexion which earned her the suspicion of being a changeling, she was a young woman of Nordic type, self-controlled and determined, very like one of the heroines of "Deluge." In some ways Elfwín was more manly than the big fair young Danish prince, Sithric, on whom she had set her heart while he was a hostage in Gloucester. The usual roles of hero and heroine were oddly inverted when Elfwín had to hold Sithric's hand because he was dizzy on a high plank bridge. Race and religion long barred their marriage. Sithric turned Christian readily, and would evidently have turned Moslem as readily if Elfwín had wished it. But he could not disown himself. And Dane and Saxon regarded each other in 915 as, in 1915, their joint descendants regarded their cousins from Saxony. So Elfwín's hope that her love would bring peace came to naught. However, the happy ending the author provides is not actually anti-historic. Elfwín and her Danish lover may really have found America a century before Leif Ericsson did.

The style of the book is peculiar; the author has tried to choose short words, and to avoid stilted phrases on one hand or modernisms on the other. So did Morris in his romances; but Morris revived old words; Mr. Fowler Wright does not. The result is a Quaker-like sobriety of phrase. It befits fights and flights, that is, most of the book. But it is not so good a medium for one-eyed Thorkald's

NEW NOVELS

Cakes and Ale. By W. Somerset Maugham. Heinemann. 7s. 6d.

Apples be Ripe. By Llewellyn Powys. Longmans. 7s. 6d.

Souvenir. By Floyd Dell. Jarrolds. 7s. 6d.

Rambling Kid. By Charles Ashleigh. Faber and Faber. 7s. 6d.

The Kingdom of Love. By Max Brod. Translated by Eric Sutton. Secker. 7s. 6d.

Seventeen. By Alaric Jacob. Methuen. 7s. 6d.

'CAKES AND ALE' affords a very good example of a successfully handled narrative. Mr. Maugham has the dramatist's eye for the situation that can be effectively presented and, with a keen perception of the ironies of existence, indicates the smile and the glance with which personal encounters are handled in real life. He comes nearest to revealing real intimacy with the reader oddly enough when he is delineating the quizzical reserves behind which his narrator, William Ashenden, confronts the overtures made to him by another and more successful novelist, Alroy Kear. The latter's famous social dexterity is extended even to charming away out of sight of his readers the more distressing side of human character. Anxious to write the Life of the late lamented *doyen* of English letters, Edward Driffield, Kear seeks material from Ashenden's childhood recollections of the Grand Old Man's life and shows characteristic solicitude for whitewashing facts which certainly could not be construed as noble but in which the shrewd realism of Driffield's creative work had unmistakably been rooted. Kear is a remarkably well-observed character. He does not conform to that Pecksniff convention of hypocrisy which enables the professional cynic to grow complacent with scorn. For he is not depicted as Machiavellian nor as affecting in private the more nauseous forms of mock modesty.

Conceivably an attempt will be made to "identify" some novelist contemporary of Mr. Maugham's. The character of Driffield may also excite some conjectures regarding identity, but it is only a tenuous sketch that we are given of the G.O.M., including, however, one or two nice touches regarding his habits, as, for instance, where Kear complains to Ashenden:

You can't deny it was rather awkward after they'd been having a lot of interesting people to lunch—people like Edmund Gosse, for instance, and Lord Curzon—that he should go down to a public-house and tell the plumber and the baker and the sanitary inspector what he thought about them.

And then there is Ashenden's own observation:

But of course what the critics wrote about Edward Driffield was eye-wash. His outstanding merit was not the realism that gave vigour to his work, nor the beauty that informed it . . . it was his longevity. Reverence for old age is one of the most admirable traits of the human race, and I think it may safely be stated that in no other country than ours is this trait more marked.

It is not cheap cynicism which one feels to be the defect in the narrator's character, preventing those tenuous outlines from being filled in with the illuminating candour of a really creative novelist, but a sort of defensiveness of spirit, masked behind his irony and reserve. Hence, no doubt, why Mr. Maugham does not really convey to his readers a sense of the mental agony and desperation undoubtedly felt by Driffield, when his first wife elopes with her (principal) lover. But besides the delicacy which one remembers from the play, 'The Unknown,' there is wit here reminiscent of 'Our Betters':

Apples be ripe
And nuts be brown
Petticoats up
And trousers down

was the song that Mr. Llewellyn Powys's hero

learned to flute while still young, but it was not every girl who would respond to this theme. The headmaster's niece, Adela, thought she could tame the young rebel teacher when she married him. But—oh, well, you know what men are!

Mr. Powys's narrative is enlivened by his sense of the colour and life in country scenes but deadened by lack of human insight and humour. For the most part this melodrama of Freedom versus Tyranny is forcibly propelled by its author through incidents made to bear the onus of proving its moral. Chris Holbeck, when running away from his school, had at least done what his wife dared him to and found consolation with his childhood's sweetheart, before dying of pneumonia after falling into a river, so what sounds like the wish-fulfilment of nursery fantasy is realized when all who had known him are made to feel "sorry now he's gone."

Felix, the playwright hero of 'Souvenir,' is keen to get "copy" out of his contacts with the Younger Generation but finds giving advice to a son, long parted from him by divorce, on his love affairs altogether too baffling an enigma. Fortunately, Felix, though none too quick in his perceptions, is not above profiting from the intuition of his womenfolk. This tale breathes the actuality of present-day issues against the background of the Greenwich Village sort of life, even if presented from the standpoint of an older man, and the atmosphere seems hundreds of miles nearer home than that of 'Apples be Ripe.'

While Mr. Floyd Dell deals with American middle-class radical-literary circles, Mr. Charles Ashleigh brings us into the company of hobo-wobblers with whom "Dos" made us acquainted after a manner nearer artistry in 'The 42nd Parallel.' Here, again, we are in an atmosphere of rough diamondism, where, apart from the police, "men are boys at heart," and it is good to know that tramps who steal from proletarian comrades are reported to the I.W.W. and struck off the roll. It is a far cry, as they say, from the Fitzroy Tavern and the *Sunday Worker* to hoboing across the United States, but this young Robin Hood works the adventure interest of real-life experience for all it is worth with a wealth of local colour and jargon and the successive incidents are built up in the manner of a newspaper reporter writing a "descriptive special."

I hesitate to describe 'The Kingdom of Love' as Freudian since some readers are inclined rather hazily to denote by that term anything that could be classified as "naughty but nice." But it is in the nature of a psychoanalytic document that Christof Nowy, a writer from Prague, unfolds to Solange Douglas, an enigmatic young woman whom he encounters on his voyage to Palestine and who provides the attentive, if ironic, audience for the disentanglement of an obsessive fear engendered by a jealous rival of his student days. While it cannot be said that the dramatic possibilities of the story are exploited with the graphic zeal of your Ludwigs and Feuchtwangers, there is a refreshing absence of lyric gush and, on the positive side, much illuminating insight into men's underlying feelings towards women is revealed by one of the more interesting and experimental of modern German novelists.

'Seventeen' is a story of public-school life by a boy of that age, since enrolled in the ranks of journalism. Boys' conversations about Life and what the Press and bishops make of them are apt to be a trifle woolly and derivative, and a matter-of-fact tone about romantic friendships, though good sense, adds little to narrative interest; but the hero's daydreams of histrionic success at a West End theatre, his observation of masters' weakness and reflections upon a calf-love affair of the holidays are allowed to speak for themselves with a quiet realism that makes one suspect that Mr. Jacob has it in him to be a novelist,

HERITAGE. (ed) ANTHONY CURTIS AND JOHN
WHITEHEAD. LONDON AND NEW YORK:
ROUTLEDGE & KEGAN PAUL, 1987

CAKES AND ALE

London, September 1930; New York, October 1930

Although the connection between the book's nominal hero Edward Driffled and Thomas Hardy is tenuous, other characters have a closer relation to real persons. Having originally denied it, Maugham afterwards admitted that Alroy Kear was based on Hugh Walpole; and other literary figures feature in the novel in thin disguise, for example Edmund Gosse. The original of the warm-hearted heroine Rosie has also been identified as Ethelwyn ('Sue') Sylvia Jones, the actress daughter of the playwright Henry Arthur Jones.

J.B. Priestley's comments on the novel will be found in his review of Maugham's play *The Breadwinner* (No. 92, p. 264).

63. Ivor Brown, 'Private Lives', *Observer*

5 October 1930, 6

Ivor Brown (1891-1974) was a critic, essayist and journalist. He was made drama critic of the *Observer* before World War II and continued as such while taking over as editor during the war on the retirement of J.L. Garvin in 1942. He returned to being drama critic without other duties at the end of the war. A prodigiously hard worker, Brown published many books on words, and on Shakespeare, aimed at the common reader, in addition to his journalism.

The title of this article refers to Noël Coward's play of that name, which had opened at the Phoenix Theatre, London, on 24 September 1930.

Mr Maugham dislikes shams, and what he dislikes he lacerates. His punishing stroke is precise; there is no flourish, no rhetoric, just cut upon cut until the dismissive 'You may go now.' *Cakes and Ale* is the tale of a literary sham and the castigation falls justly on the people who make it and not on its victim, Edward Driffield, who had been a shabby nonentity of fiction, and at last acquired immense fame as the unrolling stone gathers its moss, simply by going on being there. He was discovered and adopted by the passionate few; living beyond eighty and with his collected works running to thirty-seven volumes, he was bound to be accepted by the obedient many. After his death the life is to be written by Alroy Kear, the prosperous, the ubiquitous, the safe and serene novelist, whose genius is an infinite capacity for rolling logs. Kear approaches Ashenden, who tells the story. Ashenden, as a boy, saw much of Driffield in his middle, and still unhonoured, period. He knew the first Mrs Driffield, an ex-barmaid, plump and rosy and unvirtuous, and, of course, a considerable skeleton in the cupboard for those who are to put the finishing touches on the Driffield legend and turn the gentle, squalid, companionable old man into the National Hero and Grand Old English Gentleman whom the myth requires.

So Ashenden narrates his boyhood's acquaintance with the couple in a Kentish harbour-town. They were kind to him, took him bicycling, gave him tea, and taught him how to rub brasses. Driffield had had a rough and wandering boyhood, liked to tipple in the pub, was a trifle shy of soap, and did a bolt from his creditors. His wife was an amiable wanton. But, when his name as a novelist was rising, she left him; the lion-hunters sprang and boxed him up with fame, and hot water and a trim, managing wife. He had only to survive and renown would come with the relentless march of age itself. Ashenden has little opinion of Driffield's novels, save one; but his description of the man is rich in quiet charity. His genius was only his longevity, but he was kind, unobtrusive, and happy in the rough habits formed in vagrancy and need. His first wife was kind, too; unchaste, but comforting, not a nuisance in the world.

Mr Maugham's ears must be vexed beyond endurance with the word 'cynical,' which here he hardly merits. There is much that is brilliantly sardonic in his commentary on life and letters, but even Kear, whom he submits to searching analysis, gets his due. Log-rolling needs stamina and perseverance; the man is industrious and benign. The study of the affable Kear and of the whole process whereby Driffield is canonised is exquisite in its justice. The style is a model of irony controlled. Mr Maugham never raises his voice too high, nor brandishes his arms too widely. It is true that he stops too soon. We never know how Kear finally composed the embarrassing muddle of Driffield's life. We are left suddenly in the air; but the air is Alpine in its power to sting and quicken and enchant.

64. Evelyn Waugh, 'The Books You Read', *Graphic*

CXXVII, 15 October 1930, 426

Evelyn Waugh (1903-66) was a novelist, biographer, travel-writer, critic, diarist and wit. This review was written shortly after Waugh was received into the Roman Catholic Church (September 1930) and two years after his satirical first novel, *Decline and Fall* (1928), had appeared.

The other novels reviewed in the article, of which the following is an extract, were written by John Dos Passos and Margaret Kennedy.

Considerable excitement has been caused lately in what are called 'literary circles' by Mr Somerset Maugham's new book. The central figure, Edward Driffield, is presented as the Grand Old Man of English Letters, the last of the great Victorian novelists. He occupies, in fact, a position very much like that of Thomas Hardy in the years immediately preceding his death.

A scare was promptly started in certain newspapers that this character was intended as his portrait. If that had been so the book would have been a highly improper one; but to anyone who knows the details of Hardy's life it will be immediately apparent that the dissimilarities tend to outweigh any apparent similarities. Mr Maugham has published an emphatic denial that any part of his book was derived from or suggested by Hardy's life. There, for any intelligent person, the matter ends.

If only the public could be dissuaded from these recurrent, impertinent attributions! They are an intolerable nuisance and, occasionally, even a danger to authors. No one, not even the novelist himself, can follow the processes by which personal experience is transformed into impersonal, artistic creation. People should realise that the eager 'Oh, Mr Maugham, it is so exciting to meet you; now you will be able to tell me who all your characters really are,' is not only embarrassing but insulting.

The real interest and value of *Cakes and Ale* depend upon the manner and method of its construction, rather than upon its subject. Mr Maugham works with supreme adroitness and ease; he has in literature that quality which Americans, in social life, describe as 'poise.' I do not know of any living writer who seems to have his work so much *under control*.

This is, of course, both a triumph and a limitation. He is never boring or clumsy, he never gives a false impression; he is never shocking; but this very diplomatic polish makes impossible for him any of those sudden transcendent flashes of passion and beauty which less competent novelists occasionally attain. Indeed, he does not attempt or desire anything of the kind. 'Let us face it,' he remarks in the course of this book, 'beauty is a bit of a bore.'

The theme of *Cakes and Ale* is the life of Edward Driffled. He was a writer who attained recognition late in life. Until middle age his career was slightly disreputable. He married a barmaid, Rosie, and came to live in his native village; he left suddenly with heavy debts.

Rosie was unfaithful to him, with most of his male friends. The most important of these were Ashenden, who tells the story, and George Kemp, a builder; this jolly man was her first lover; he always maintained supremacy in her affections because he was 'such a perfect gentleman.' Eventually she eloped with him to

America. After that Driffled fell into the hands of a lion-hunting hostess; he escaped from her by marrying a hospital nurse. With her he settled down to a period of eminence and respectability, enlivened by occasional, rather furtive visits to the village 'pub.'

After his death, his widow conspires with Mr Alroy Kear, a writer to whose deficiencies Mr Maugham gives unbalanced prominence, to suppress the less presentable features of his career. They solicit the help of Ashenden, Rosie's lover, more with the intention of securing his silence than his information. Ashenden is silent for his own reasons. Among other facts he keeps to himself the knowledge that Rosie is still alive, happy and prosperous in America.

This simple story is transformed into a novel by Mr Maugham's brilliant technical dexterity. He is a master for creating the appetite for information, of withholding it until the right moment, and then providing it surprisingly. One knows that an incident is imminent and does not know in what direction to watch for it. He flits from past to present, now giving a merciless analysis of literary humbug, now recounting the upbringing of Ashenden in provincial refinement, now racing on with an exciting love scene, now pausing to moralise.

65. Leslie A. Marchand, 'Maugham Paints a Sardonic Portrait', *New York Times*

12 October 1930, 7

Leslie Alexis Marchand (b. 1900) is a critic, biographer and Byron scholar. His edition of Byron's letters is an outstanding work of editing.

No English writer is more transparently, more unblushingly autobiographic than Somerset Maugham. His frank introspective

WE SHOULD BE PROUD OF SOMERSET MAUGHAM*

Harold Nicolson

We have a tendency in this country to underestimate all authors who make us laugh. A sense of humour, the play of wit, may make an author popular, but they prevent him from being taken seriously. Mr. Galsworthy, for instance, is never funny. He tries desperately to be funny, poor earnest man, but he fails.

His failure to amuse is compensated by his success in inducing the public to take him seriously. Whereas let the truth be told, Mr. Galsworthy cannot think for nuts; no, that is an overstatement; Mr. Galsworthy is a patient and deserving author; he will live, certainly he will live; Mr. Galsworthy will live as an example of the unctuous futility of our age. And I do not care if he hears me saying so.

These rude remarks are prompted by the case of Mr. Somerset Maugham. I do not in general feel so bitter about Mr. Galsworthy, since Mr. Galsworthy (a wholly deserving man, as I said in my second paragraph) is really not worth being bitter about. But I do feel bitter about Mr. Somerset Maugham. Here is a man of whom any nation might feel proud. And are we proud of Somerset Maugham? Not in the least. All we say about him is, "So brilliant, such a clever man, but after all..."

If we were more honest we should complete the sentence. The end of that sentence would be, "but after all he does write harshly, doesn't he?"

A Brilliant Firework

Now, "Human Bondage" is one of the few books published in the last twenty years which can be described as important. I seldom agree with Arnold Bennett on literary as distinct from human matters, but on this point I am with Bennett all the time. I do not like using the word "important," but in regard to this particular book I find no other word to use.

I rather wish that he had given me something more solid as a basis for this doxotoges than "Cakes and Ales." I do not pretend that this book is very "important." But I do contend that it is amazingly adroit.

After all, the art of fiction is the exercise of artifice. Seldom have I witnessed a firework more brilliant, more satisfying, more provocative than "Cakes and ale." I have

seen it stated somewhere that Mr. Maugham has "cribbed" the character of Thomas Hardy. That is absurd. It is as foolish to say that Edward Driffield is modelled on Thomas Hardy as to say that Alroy Kear is modelled on Mr. John Drinkwater.

Mr. Selfridge does not find it necessary to pilfer from his own counters. Mr. Maugham does not find it necessary to go to Madame Tussaud for his characters. And apart from all that, the centre of the book, its essential theme, is not Edward Driffield.

What has interested Mr. Maugham and me is the strange behaviour of shallow characters when faced with a genius. Mr. Dreffield for the purpose of this book is a draped figure labelled "A genius." He may suggest Hardy to some people, and to others he may suggest Meredith. That is beside the point. The whole point and purport of this book is a study in intellectual snobbishness.

And it is a brilliant study.

* Article published in the *Daily Express* on October 07, 1930

**A WIDOW ON
RICHMOND
GREEN**

by
HILARY MARCH
(Author of *Simon Wisdom*)

7/6

**THE COTSWOLD
CHRONICLE**

by
ALICE MASSIE
(Author of *The Shadow on the Road*)

7/6

**THE HANGING OF
CABELL BRAXTON**

by
ROBERT McBLAIR
(Author of *Mister Fish Kelly*)

7/6

BESANT & Co. Ltd., 21 Orange St., W.C.2

Evening Post—a bi-weekly evening paper of 1775—and on the nonsense rhyme "Abdul the Bulbul Ameer." Mr. Brown's *Brown Studies* do not altogether survive the struggling pun of the title. They are more topical than Mr. Lucas's—cricket, August, and post-office thefts are among his subjects—and Mr. Brown's love of alliteration and punning, together with the publisher's attempt to emphasise all proper names with capitals, make the book difficult to read without exasperation. After each essay one is tempted to put it down; and this is a pity, because when Mr. Brown is not writing merely to fill space he has something lively and pointed to say on almost any subject.

The Life of Robert Owen. By G. D. H. COLE. Macmillan. 12s. 6d.

This able and illuminating work was first published five years ago by Messrs. Benn, and was reviewed in our columns at the time. The present edition is more than a reprint. Mr. Cole has drastically revised the opening chapter, and now gives us what is practically a new essay on Owen's relation to the development of Socialist thought. He brings out succinctly the points of agreement and difference between Owen and the apostles of the new economic order, his acceptance of industrialism, but with the supreme proviso that it must be put under rigorous social control. He stresses, too, Owen's remarkable lack of interest in the political and intellectual upheaval of the French Revolution. And he shows how the successful capitalist became "the father of British Socialism," and how he was driven or led, partly by the force of his own ideas, partly by circumstances, into the leadership of a proletarian revolt, and the foundation of the modern Trade Union and Co-operative movements.

Impressions and Recollections. By Brig.-General F. P. CROZIER. Laurie. 21s.

General Crozier has a lively pen, as was proved by his *A Brass Hat in No Man's Land*; and parts of this book may evoke a controversy as vivid as that which was the result of his war-book. In telling of his time in Ireland General Crozier is candid and fearless, and his volume should be quoted as evidence that one gallant man refused to connive at the ghastly policy encouraged by the Government in its efforts to suppress Sinn Fein. The chapters on South Africa and on Lithuania are excellent examples of the writing of a man of action. Some readers may get the impression that General Crozier is rather a quarrelsome man; but we fancy he was only troublesome when to be easy was to be dishonest and dishonoured.

George Whitefield. By ALBERT D. BELDEN. Sampson Low. 12s. 6d.

Mr. Belden has written a stirring and enthusiastic biography of Whitefield. It was inevitable that the figure of the Gloucester inn-keeper's son should be overshadowed by that of his great contemporary Wesley; yet Whitefield had some talents as remarkable as Wesley's, and if not a greater preacher was more in the great tradition of mission preaching. That tradition is quite free from party alignment. Bonaventure and Dominic, Luther and Latimer, Fox and Wesley, all share in it. The history of the Methodist movement is the history of a missed opportunity; to-day there is an opportunity of curing the ills then made, but who can tell whether it will be taken? Nothing can be more helpful than a proper study of the past, such as is made in this volume.

"I Was an Actor Once." By ROBERT COURTNEIDGE. Hutchinson. 12s. 6d.

Mr. Courtneidge writes in a pleasant, gossipy vein, and with a modesty rare in autobiographers. He is still remembered as the producer of *The Arcadians*; but he has much else to his credit beside that astonishing success. He has known most of the well-known actors and actresses of his day from Irving and Toole to Jack Hulbert and Noel Coward. He has made money, and lost money, and his advice to "every stage aspirant" is Don't. There are some good stories in the book, of which the best is of a rebuke administered by Sir Alexander Mackenzie to "a lady instrumentalist who did not follow his beat: 'Young lady, this is an orchestra—not an elastic band.'"

Cakes and Ale. By W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM. Heinemann. 7s. 6d.

Mr. Maugham has rarely written a more expert story than this; but the thinness of his theme is not concealed by his dexterity. Driffield has died. Driffield is the doyen of English novelists—and he has lived to be more than 80 years old. He is a great figure, but never could be persuaded to value himself as such, though his second wife has coaxed him into cleanliness and respectability. For he was not always reputable. So when Ashenden, who has known him in the old days, is visited by the pompous Alroy Kear, who is anxious to try on Elijah's mantle and decorate the tomb of the old prophet, he has nothing useful to tell him. He can only say how the first Mrs. Driffield was gay and unfaithful, how the Driffields "shot the moon," how Driffield sang music-hall songs. Mr. Maugham tells his story with wit and unflinching intelligence, but never a sign that the problem he is handling has, too, its profundities.

London Lanes. By ALAN STAPLETON. Lane. 15s.

Mr. Stapleton's *London Alleys, Bye-ways and Courts* was seized on with enthusiasm by all judicious collectors of Londiniana; and they will be equally eager to possess this new volume, with its forty delightful pencil drawings, and its pleasant, communicative text. Mr. Stapleton has discovered over nine hundred "lanes" in London. There are Londoners who would be hard put to it to name more than half-dozen, though everyone presumably knows "The Lane" of Drury, Chancery Lane, Park Lane, Marylebone Lane, Love Lane and Maiden Lane. Mr. Stapleton writes amusingly and learnedly, and his book will be a great delight to all who can still loiter about London.

THE HOGARTH PRESS
52 Tavistock Square, W.C.1

Autumn Announcements: *Already Published:*

AS YOU WERE. By WILFRID BENSON. 7/6
A new novel by the author of *Dawn on Mont Blanc*.

HISTORY AS DIRECTION. By J. S. HOYLAND. 7/6
A study of Spengler's historical method; suggests a new method of history teaching.

LIFE OF MILTON, together with OBSERVATIONS ON PARADISE LOST. By LOUIS RACINE. Translated, with an introduction, by KATHERINE JOHN. 7/6
The introduction contains an account of Louis Racine and of Miltonic appreciation in France.

LIVING PAINTERS: DUNCAN GRANT. 3/6
A new, cheap edition of the volume, first published in 1924, containing 24 half-tone plates.

THE ARMED MUSE. By HERBERT E. PALMER. 3/6
Mr. Palmer's new book of Poems.

25,000 COPIES SOLD AND STILL SELLING.
THE EDWARDIANS. By V. SACKVILLE-WEST. 7/6

14,000 COPIES SOLD AND STILL SELLING.
A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN. By VIRGINIA WOOLF. 5/-

of organization, incapable of precision or punctuality, with little or no respect for accuracy or for a promise given."

The difficulties which stood in the way of overthrowing Bolshevism in its early stage by force of arms were manifold. First, there was the scarcity of money among the leaders of the movement which started towards the end of 1917 in the Don Cossack country. That was overcome later by subsidies from the Allies, chiefly England. It was reckoned at the time that Mr. Churchill had assisted Denikine and Kolchak to the amount of a million pounds. Next, there were the conflicting interests of the participants in the rising. The Cossacks could never be relied on, the book complains. They were "here to-day and gone to-morrow." That was true also of large numbers of the Volunteers. Then the various districts which set up governments of their own were more intent upon their own security and interest than upon the common aim: they made terms with the Bolsheviks whenever they could. But the impression left by General Denikine's narrative is that the chief of the obstacles between the White Army and success was the weakness of the Russian character.

Several times, according to the book, success was within reach. Every time some breakdown either in leadership or in co-operation prevented its being seized. Wrangel, it seems, was always convinced that his own ideas were far better than those which he received from the Supreme Command:—

"Not a day passed without a telegram from General Wrangel—nervous, exacting, sharp messages, even at times insulting. Some times we received from him whole pamphlets in the form of letters, copies of which, as it appeared later, he circulated among the senior commanding officers. All this correspondence aimed at proving the superiority of his own strategical and tactical plans, alleged a premeditated negligence towards his army, and our responsibility for hindrance and the failures of his own operations. These systematic internal bickerings created a most unpleasant atmosphere and mutual antagonism."

The Supreme Command was certainly not faultless. General Alexyef was a sick man and had not the firm grip of which he gave proof when he extricated the Tsar's army from the skilful German trap laid for it in 1915. Subordinates made costly mistakes. In one hour of crisis when the Whites were closing their lines of investment upon an important centre, a railway line was left intact and unguarded. An enemy armoured train came along it and caused appalling havoc. Only the killing of Kornilov by a shell that struck his hut saved the main body from extermination in a mad attempt to storm Ekaterinodar on which he had determined against the advice of all the other generals. Denikine reproaches the Allies for not doing more to help. They did, on his own showing, a good deal—especially Great Britain. But they saw where the weakness of the insurgent movement lay and they could not imagine the creation of a workable government by the White leaders, even if the Soviet system should be overturned.

Yet the story told here is one that stirs admiration as well as sympathy. The growth of the Volunteer Army was marvellous. If there had been a Trotsky with clever Jewish brain to organize it, the result of its campaigns might have been different. Many isolated feats of daring showed the spirit that was in the White troops—at times. Here is one, the capture of an armoured train by infantry!

"Slowly, all lights extinguished, it advanced upon us. . . . General Markov, brandishing his riding-whip, ran to the slowly crawling engine.

"Halt! Can't you see we're friends?"
The train stopped. Before the dumbfounded engine driver could realize what had happened, Markov seized a hand grenade from one of the snipers and hurled it right into the machine. There was an explosion, and immediately a heavy rifle and machine-gun fire opened against us from every carriage.

Simultaneously Colonel Mionchinsky rapidly drew a gun up to the signal-box and in spite of bullets raining around him, managed to aim almost point-blank at the train.

The gun boomed, the shell struck the engine, which amid terrific uproar overturned on the rails. A second and third shell crashed into the armoured carriages. Then from all sides rushed Markov's officers, with him at their head, hurling themselves against the train. They fired into the sides of the carriages, climbed on the roof, hacked apertures with axes and threw bombs through the holes; resinous tow was brought from the signal-box and soon two carriages were ablaze. The Bolsheviks evinced fortitude and did not surrender; ceaseless firing went on from the carriages. Isolated Bolsheviks ran out on the line, but were immediately bayoneted. . . . Soon all was over."

The passages quoted show the style in which the book is written and translated. Now and then the General is truly eloquent—when he makes least effort, as when he writes of the Volunteers who were taken to Turkey, to the Balkans, to the Baltic States. Some day the General hopes they will return to Russia "as capable workers in all branches of toil, erudition, science and art. They will return as men tempered by dangers, hardships and the struggle for life, who amid untold and exceptional duress kept alive their spirit, energy and patriotism."

To which all of us must heartily say "Amen."

Fiction

Five Established Novelists

Imperial Palace. By Arnold Bennett. (Cassell. 10s. 6d.)
Faber. By Jacob Wassermann. (Allen and Unwin. 7s. 6d.)
Cakes and Ale. By Somerset Maugham. (Heinemann. 7s. 6d.)
Adrian Glynde. By Martin Armstrong. (Gollancz. 7s. 6d.)
On Forsyte 'Change. By John Galsworthy. (Heinemann. 7s. 6d.)

LIKE the child in the legend of St. Nicholas, Mr. Bennett has dreamed he was in paradise, though all the time he was in pickle. By paradise Mr. Bennett understands, of course, the super, de luxe, grand Babylon hotel, all-British, all-talking, all-everything. And by pickle I mean that period of documentation which Mr. Bennett passes through before serving himself up. Documentation he has very rightly been dinning into us for years until, it seems to me, in this book, he has made the capacity for information more important than the capacity for experience. In *Imperial Palace* documentation attains its apotheosis. It is strange, however, that Mr. Bennett, who has been dinning Balzac into us as well, should not have paid attention to the warning in *Le Chef D'Oeuvre Inconnu*, about the painter who painted and painted and painted until there was nothing on the canvas. Documentation, pickling oneself in facts, has its similar snares.

The 'Imperial Palace' is the kind of hotel whose directors are gods, whose managers are archangels, whose myriad head-waiters and staff are the choir of cherubim and seraphim. Such an hotel, like the department store, is an agglomeration peculiarly symptomatic of our time, and Mr. Bennett believes in it, likes it, worships it, and knows more about it than anyone else. He can tell you exactly what goes on, from what happens when you order a soufflé, to the reactions of the hotel laundry when you complain about your frilled evening shirts. In these things Mr. Bennett is sublimely knowing. The central figure of the book is not Evelyn Orham, the super business man who directs the hotel, who is its creator, and whom romantic and illicit love fails finally to seduce from his creation; but the



'Imperial Palace,' the hotel itself. This is a curious reversal of rôles. The overwhelming tendency is for every character and episode to illustrate some phase of hotel organization, and not for this to illuminate some phase in the development of character. And you have to be mightily interested in *de luxe* hotels rather than in people to go so far with Mr. Bennett. Yet Evelyn Orcham's affair *outside* the hotel with Grace Savott, the daughter of one of his directors, is nothing like as good and convincing—though, being out of the hotel, it is much more refreshing—as his affair with the sober, dutiful Violet Powler, who is creeping up the ranks of the business. Mr. Bennett has always made a point of deifying the banal and ordinary, and Violet Powler is his triumphant justification. This is the dull woman made beautiful, passionate, perfect, a character made to grow and deepen before our eyes, with masterly skill. The guests of the hotel *de luxe* have frequently been drawn by Mr. Bennett; now he has "done" the staff, and, indeed, at the 'Imperial Palace' one has perhaps perversely the impression that there are hardly any guests. There is a great deal that is absolutely first class in this book, but one needs to be a very old patron of the management not to find pages and pages of it terribly dull.

Herr Wassermann is as abstract and vague as Mr. Bennett is concrete. One is baffled and eventually exasperated by the troubles of these damp and yearning Teutonic wraiths. One gathers the book is concerned with an acute and common problem of these times: the tragedy that ensues when a wife takes to religion, good works and the adoration of a prophetess, and is so preoccupied with "higher things" that she comes to abhor normal physical relations with her husband and is willing to break up her home. And there, having slipped from any recognizable anchorage in reality, and lost in a mist of discussion, Mr. Wassermann leaves his creatures.

Mr. Maugham has brought a pleasant relief to the task of reading five established authors in a week-end by exposing with biting irony the humbug and nonsense which is talked about established authors. Either artists are taken, as Herr Wassermann takes his wraiths, with such soulful intensity

that one cannot believe they ever lived; they sit, a mixture of Arthur and Merlin, pen in hand at the Table Round. Or, on the other hand, the artist is drawn to look like any ordinary tradesman, "warts and all," and then one is entirely unable to believe that he wrote anything worth reading. This is Mr. Maugham's danger with Edward Driffield, whose life story he tells with biting malice at the expense of Driffield's admirers. The attempt of Driffield's dreary second wife to turn the hearty old rogue into a respectable "grand old man" of English Letters provides excellent comedy. But the best thing in the book is the narrator's account of his affair with Driffield's first wife, a masterly and sane piece of work and a delightful piece of characterization. There is something of the feeling of "Hail and Farewell" in Mr. Maugham's coolness and malice, though he has not the limpidity of the master. His trapesings to and fro in his memory of Driffield are decidedly mechanical.

Mr. Martin Armstrong in *Adrian Glynde* also deals with an artist, or at least with an incipient one. He traces the gradual development of the character and spiritual nature of a sensitive child from boyhood to adolescence, through certain episodes of friendship and betrayal. Mr. Armstrong's world always has the air of a perfect and sedate piece of interior decoration, and he pores over the minds of his characters as over a piece of glowing embroidery. His prose has a lucidity and a fastidious glow, and it warns one like a gentle winc. Yet *Adrian Glynde*, sensitive as it is, strikes one as marking no new advance on, say, *St. Christopher's Day*, and for all its shrewdness, pure poetry, and spinsterly humour, is puzzling and dullish.

The mental processes of the Forsytes are to be compared with the tapping of the telegraph rather than with the convolutions of thread. Those abrupt little slangy sentences which telegraph the messages of the Forsyte mentality from the days of "Superior Dossett," down the long complicated system of uncles, brothers, cousins, wives to the Soames of 1917! This book contains nearly a score of stories put together from this tapping. The original creative passion has cooled down. These episodes are shadows of shades. But Mr. Galsworthy has earned his capital, invested it, and is now entitled to live on the interest. One can go on reading about the Forsytes as one goes on talking about one's relations. To hear about June's first "lame duck," Juley's courtship, or the dishonest builder, who was indirectly responsible for thwarting Aunt Ann's affair, by using salt water in his plaster, is soothing and amusing.

V. S. PRITCHETT.

THE TICKER TAPE MURDER. By Milton Propper. (Faber and Faber. 7s. 6d.)—In this American mystery story the Americans do not behave in such a caricature of the American manner as usual. The millionaire who is murdered is quite believable, the detective human and unforceful, the man with the arms like a gorilla is not the murderer, and the villain is the hero. Perhaps the only defect of the book is the stale trick by which a real criminal is only introduced at the last moment, but the clearing of one suspect after another is so ingeniously accomplished that the interest is maintained. Mr. Propper does not disdain to be thrilled by fast driving in motors, a running fight, or even the lack of sophistication of the heroine, and this makes him extremely good company.

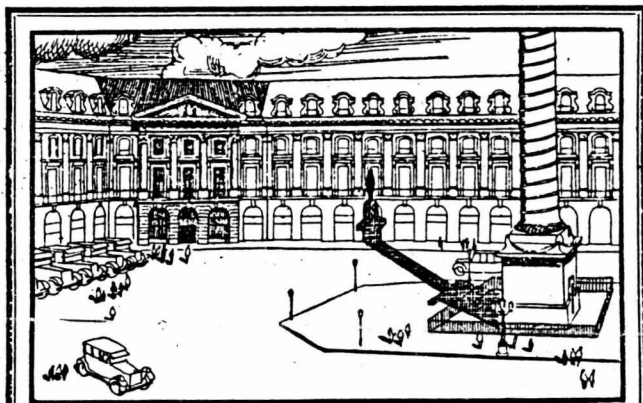
General Knowledge Questions

OUR weekly prize of one guinea for the best thirteen Questions submitted is awarded this week to Lieut. B. Stracey Clitherow, H.M.S. 'Vortigern,' c/o G.P.O., London, for the following:—

Questions on Horses

1. What horse is regarded as the greatest horse of all time?
2. What horse is regarded as the fastest horse of all time?
3. (a) What was the "Broken Link Handicap"? (b) Who was the "Maltese Cat"?
4. Who was the famous Train Band Captain whose horse ran away with him?
5. What was the last horse that won the Derby and was then disqualified?
6. What mare won the "Loamshire Hunt Cup"?
7. What horse carried the "Good News" to Aix?
8. Who offered to exchange his estates for a horse?
9. Who wanted to borrow a grey mare and from whom?
10. To whom did the following famous horses belong: (a) Rosinante, (b) Buccephalus, (c) Bevis, (d) Bayard.
11. Who was given to his own horses as a meal and by whom?
12. Who drove the first "four-in-hand"?
13. What famous Scots clan's gathering cry suggests the winner of one of the post-War Grand Nationals?

Answers will be found on page viii.



MONEY IN PARIS

Almost under the shadow of the Colonne Vendôme, and hard by the Opéra and the Rue de Rivoli, is the Paris office of the Westminster Foreign Bank. Whether on pleasure or business bent, English-speaking visitors are often thankful for some such centre to which they can turn for guidance and information upon exchange and banking matters. That English ways are understood here is assured by the presence of a resident English Director, Manager, and Sub-Manager, and travellers are invited to avail themselves of the help that is readily given

WESTMINSTER BANK
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NEW NOVELS

- The White Paternoster.** By T. F. POWYS. (Chatto & Windus. 7s. 6d.)
- As You Were.** By WILFRID BENSON. (Hogarth Press. 7s. 6d.)
- The Fool of the Family.** By MARGARET KENNEDY. (Heinemann. 7s. 6d.)
- The Flame on Ethirdova.** By HECTOR BOLITHO. (Cobden-Sanderson. 7s. 6d.)
- Cakes and Ale.** By W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM. (Heinemann. 7s. 6d.)
- A Woman on Her Way.** By JOHN VAN DRUTEN. (Putnam. 7s. 6d.)
- The Lion Took Fright.** By LOUIS MARLOW. (Mundanus. 3s.)
- The Murder at the Vicarage.** By AGATHA CHRISTIE. (Collins. 7s. 6d.)

ONE thing is explicit or implicit in these books. Not love, for that would be old-fashioned; nor seduction, for that would be melodrama and belongs to the top-hat period. Sex without love, a mental, furtive excitement without obligation, without compassion, without dignity, is in one form or another either the theme or the outstanding episode in most of these novels. Each man or woman has at least one shrivelled scalp to hang at the waist. That duplicates are worn disturbs no one. Why should it in these days of mass production?

But, softly! Mr. Powys, at least, is not subject to a generalization; he comes within it, but also he lives alone. He must, indeed, feel utterly lonely. He would seem to be in love with this green earth, its woods and flowers, the flush of morning and the quiet of evening, for only love and wonder could create the scene with such beauty of expression. If man had never come to stain this radiant earth! Only he is vile. Against the fine background, too, he is doubly beastly. Mr. Powys sees him like that; what to most people seems abnormal is to Mr. Powys humanly normal. Does he mean that men become cruel and lewd, and cheats, through living close to Nature? Then his own feeling for Nature is most strange. But Mr. Powys presents many enigmas. Some of these stories are moralities, and it may or may not be significant, but is certainly curious, that when goodness and mercy enter in they are accompanied by the supernatural. There is comedy, too—but how bitter the laughter! Swift looked at mankind and abandoned hope, but his fury was of pity. Mr. Powys is without fury; calmly, quietly, and with pitiless skill he pictures the meanness in the heart, while the earth shines and is indifferent.

Mr. Powys deals with the inexplicableness of the individual; Mr. Benson with the inexplicableness of the mob. This, the latest of the war books, deals not with the war, but with Rupert Carne's preparation for it in the O.T.C. Young, even for eighteen, he went straight from school irked by knowledge of his youth and inexperience. His comrades were irked still more, for there was an equanimity and purpose about Rupert that compelled their interest, and an unassailable virginity of outlook which was almost an impertinence. The sergeant-major was long before he realized that his wish to save Rupert from the consequences of his youth was stronger than his self-acknowledged desire to see him destroyed. Mr. Benson's study is of adolescence, but it is adolescence of the mind more than of the body. We see Rupert emerge with the promise of his boyhood on the fair way to fulfilment, though it took all the active diplomacy of his friends to save him from the results of his Armistice Day folly. The story is faithful to the youth of the closing war years. Mr. Benson writes as those boys wrote and spoke of Berkhamsted, Bath, and other great training centres. "As You Were" has a definite place among the War books, though the War ended before Rupert Carne was ready for service.

We pass from the sanity of war to the Fascism of peace. Perhaps it would be too much to expect that the Sanger family could maintain their freshness in another book. In "The Fool of the Family" Sebastian and Caryl Sanger appear before the footlights attended by two inconstant nymphs. Sebastian is unstable as ever and leaps agilely away from any trouble he has created. Caryl plods on heavily "doing the job that's nearest." The contrast between these two men is so violent that each sees clearly what the other is, knows what he is thinking, knows what he will

do. "The elephant and the kangaroo, one more river to cross." We admire the indomitable courage of Miss Kennedy and the skill with which she disposes of her cumbersome cargo. With members of the Sanger family there will always be another river, though it is doubtful whether they will reach their destination. Miss Kennedy describes the picturesque and richly coloured with enviable ease. She is a storyteller with a spell difficult to withstand.

Now back to the Middle Ages. In Mr. Bolitho's romance figure the Duke of Ethirdova, who "gave most of his life to eating and drinking and smacking his belly," his nephew Father Philip who took long to savour the kernel of his faith, and John, a half-witted village boy, who was canonized after his death because of the sanctity of his life. Mr. Bolitho's writing is as a tranquil river flowing in the sunlight; it moves with the word and the law that is behind the word. We glide happily with the tide on a journey that reveals many surprises and beauties.

There is nothing mediæval about Mr. Somerset Maugham. "Cakes and Ale," for all its cleverness, is a confession of lack of creative gift. The formula is simple. Take one of the finest characters and greatest writers of the century; establish by well-known facts the identity of the writer in the minds of the reader—and then invent, but let the invention be belittlement. The story is told by a not too successful author named Ashenden, one time a medical student and later a playwright, who is envious of the financial successes of the best-sellers and the big reputation of the great writers. He has not a foot in either world. Ashenden is one of a deputation of writers who went to the great man on his eightieth birthday to do homage—homage that was unsought. The account of that visit leaves a nasty taste. Hospitality has seldom been so maltreated. In Ashenden the author is to be congratulated upon presenting a perfect type of cad to the world, one who, it can be said in his favour, makes no pretence to be a man of taste, honour, or anything decent. Mr. Maugham has taught us to expect from him the almost too perfect courier. He knows the face values of everything. His urbanity shines more than the most advertised boot polish. If we do not see the glinting rapier of satire, we have our darkness illumined by regulation-sized dinner rockets and a handful of Chinese crackers exploded with the zest of a schoolboy.

Now look at Elinor, "A Woman on Her Way," who is a woman of forty. Having divorced her husband, Elinor takes to herself seven lovers, but, as one of her friends said, she was notoriously a bad picker. Judging by the two samples we are given we are in complete agreement. Elinor gives herself to her lovers without any apparent reason; she is not in love with them, and has no desire for a permanent relationship. Early in the story she confides to a man friend that owing to an operation she is prevented from bearing children. But away with Victorian circumlocutions! What Elinor actually said was, "I had all my insides out." We feel that we are reading the love story of a eunuch. It is a vivid study of the Bohemian type of solitary woman.

"The Lion Took Fright"—and maybe the reader will before he reads much of this amazing story. But if he is able to stand an unpleasant episode in which a mad doctor figures, and can shut his eyes to the distasteful habits of the doctor's wife, there will be much to reward him. Julia Derrick, the character round whom this story spins, is a girl of seventeen who has the delicate, dream-like quality of a Henry James heroine. Hercules Brangdon, a middle-aged philanderer, deliberately gains Julia's affections, knowing the while that he is tampering with a child whose mind has not learned unchastity from her body. Her purity is an obsession with him. Fortunately a fatal accident disposes of Brangdon, and Julia, with knowledge to aid her intuitions, achieves a balance which makes her fit to face her own problems. This book, with its yellow paper cover, is an attempt by the publishers to produce a full-length novel at a price that all can afford.

We feel that "The Murder at the Vicarage" ought really to round off the moral; but the moral is not easy to find. We "hardly feel but see that it is there." Psychological correctness should, logically, be the all-important element in a novel, and certainly it is the chief element of interest in the works noticed above. Yet they have not con-

vinced us quite. On the other hand, Mrs. Agatha Christie's book, which must be placed with those classed by Anatole France as "Outside Literature," having no psychological interest whatever, is as skilful in one way as they are in another and a good deal more exciting. A crime is committed in a country vicarage and the game is to find the culprit. It can be called a game, for in such a village it would not matter much who went to the gallows, and the hunt for the murderer is quite as amusing as playing "Sardines." As a "hider" the author is decidedly clever, keeping the secret to the end.

KATHLEEN C. TOMLINSON.

THE HONOUR OF BRISTOL

Bristol Privateers and Ships of War. By COMMANDER J. W. DAMER POWELL, R.N.R. (Arrowsmith. 31s. 6d.)

In the days when Bristol was the biggest and most flourishing port in England, with the single exception of London, men sang, to the tune of "Our Noble King in his Progress," that admirable ballad, "The Honour of Bristol." It is one of the many rewards of studying the handsome and substantial volume which Commander Damer Powell has compiled for the honour of Bristol, to come across not only the ballad itself but the authentic record of the letter of marque issued to that gallant ship "The Angel Gabriel," and "The Captain, famous Netheway." Commander Powell has aimed at making a solid contribution to British maritime history, and he has succeeded, but while his book is inevitably, to a great extent, a work of reference, it abounds in picturesque detail of the part played by Bristol seamen, shipbuilders, and shipowners, in the long fight for maritime supremacy.

In the first part of the book, Commander Powell gives an account, in chronological order, of all ships built at Bristol for the Royal Navy, from the fifth-rate "Islip," of 1654, to the gunboats constructed during the Crimean War; giving their builders, principal dimensions, and a brief record of their war service. This is followed by some details of Bristol ships hired for the Royal service from 1315 to the Great War. The bulk of the volume, however, deals with private men-of-war. It contains at least a brief reference—name, tonnage, commander, and owners—to every Bristol privateer and letter-of-marque ship that can be traced, beginning with "The James of Bristol" and "The Trinity of Bristol" in 1405. Sufficient material has been discovered to add a brief record of cruises and captures made by a large proportion of the ships, and the careers of the more eminent privateers, such as that notable Elizabethan sailor, Martin Pring, Woodes Rogers, and his subordinates Edward Cooke and Thomas Dover, are given at some length. Commander Powell has been hampered by the destruction of records when the Bristol Custom House was burnt down in 1831, but he has made extensive researches in the State Papers, and has found much useful material in the files of eighteenth-century newspapers. The book is full of valuable detail: reprints of privateers' advertisements, details of construction, particulars as to seamen's wages and conditions, sidelights on the law and practice of privateering, and on the protection of commerce. It is enlivened by many stirring narratives of captures, losses, and shipwrecks, mainly in the words of contemporary documents. The appendices include a valuable list of Bristol-built ships receiving the bounty under the Tudors, verbatim reprints of owners' instructions to privateer captains, and the gunner's stores and outfit accounts of a typical privateer.

The illustrations are unusually numerous and unusually good, including several particularly fine ship prints after Nicholas Pocock, from originals in the Bristol Museum. Indeed, Commander Powell and his publishers deserve a very hearty vote of thanks from those interested in maritime history in general, and that curious branch of it which deals with the private man-of-war in particular. Unfortunately, he has not been able to give us profit-and-loss accounts, but his book strongly confirms the impression that the business, at best, was wildly speculative.

It should be added that a limited edition de luxe, in leather, is available at £3 3s.

C. ERNEST FAYLE.

BECKFORDIANA

The Vision, and Liber Veritatis. By WILLIAM BECKFORD. (Constable. 18s.)

THIS is the third volume of Mr. Guy Chapman's edition of Beckford's works, and its contents are quite new. Their literary interest is not great; but their psychological fascination is considerable.

"The Vision" is an unfinished romance, written at the age of seventeen. The hero, climbing about the Alps by moonlight, falls in with a (seeming) Brahmin, and a beautiful Indian, his disciple: after severe initiatory sufferings, he is permitted to enter the Halls of the Glorious, and to explore the rich and spacious country inside the earth. The story is Vathek in embryo—the Orientalism, the landscape, the supernatural are there—the heroine is even called Nouronihar—but it is a very youthful Vathek, without humour, without crispness, and totally without backbone. We do not know if Beckford finished it, but we would be surprised to hear he did, for the plot was evidently leading nowhere. The manner is, in places, highly Ossianic, and a good deal more dramatic than the substance warrants; it has, besides, the earnestness of youth, and a pleasing inclination to the sententious. "You ought," he says to the friend who was to read his manuscript, "to be extremely cautious to whom you show the long Story. . . . All that concerns the Sanctuary is too solemn and sacred to be profaned. The subject is very grave and serious." The sanctuary, however, is the flattest part; it was beyond his powers. The whole work, indeed, as might be expected from the age of the writer, is more remarkable for fancy than imagination; the scenes are rich, but they are not exactly telling. The language is effective on the whole, but very Frenchified, and not invariably grammatical. Mr. Chapman has respected the MS. in, and occasionally out of, reason; a few more commas would have done no harm, and some are wrongly placed.

The "Liber Veritatis" is another matter. It is the work of Beckford's old age, his darling joke, his retort on the ministers who would not make him a baron, his grand revenge on the hateful people who were barons already. He has set out to expose the aristocracy. He delves into their past; he points out that So-and-so's grandfather was illegitimate, and his aunt married an apothecary. He pursues them with unflagging irony from page to page. But the campaign of frightfulness falls slightly flat. For one thing, he makes the most ordinary facts sound unconvincing: like many people who are themselves out of touch with reality, he has that gift. And the subject is not, like Beckford's indignation, inexhaustible. What saves the book is its amazing puerility, to which one cannot instantly make up one's mind: this is the kind of thing:—

"The maternal origin of the late Earl of Abingdon was delightfully musical; La Signorina Collins professed the science of sweet sounds with much success before she became Countess of Abingdon. So did her Ladyship's brother, his Lordship's uncle, a tall, sallow Italian . . . whom I remember perfectly well visiting my mother more than half a century ago, in the capacity of her teacher of the Guitar. This respectable Lutanist and one of the very last of that interesting tribe of serenaders had a niece, the Lady Elizabeth Bertie, who proved her sincere desire of encouraging the elegant arts by taking as a Husband an admirable artist in his walk, my most esteemed and right entirely approved dancing master, Signor Gallini, afterwards Sir John. . . ."

"To that much enduring Class the Instructors of Youth, commonly called Tutors and sometimes Dispensers of the Birch, two of our great Ladies have shown every encouragement in their power. . . ."

And so on; there is a great deal of it. The grander flights are unhappily too long to quote. Ladies of noble family who marry beneath them come in for the worst language; and when we learn that Beckford was himself the offspring of just such a union, we begin to feel uncomfortable. This is a stroke of irony quite in the author's vein, but a quarter of an inch beyond his reach; nature alone, in a Beckfordian moment, could have managed it.

K. JOHN.

whom he saw drifting into fatal antagonisms, with so terribly much at stake and amid scenes of unequalled poignancy, is reflected to a memorable degree in his pages.

Whenas to books the angler bends,
Fly Fishing (hear him say)
 Stands firm among his angling friends
 As when young EDWARD GREY
 First dreamed his dream where waters
 flow,
 Then, with an April pen,
 Wrote down (what—thirty years
 ago?)
 His book for fishermen.

To-day, behold, the selfsame hand
 Has added to, has decked
 Its classic by "Spring Salmon" and
 A gallant "Retrospect":
 For still there's boyhood in his theme
 Who treads where Youth has trod
 And sees the shadow on the stream
 Without an Ichabod.

"*Fly Fishing*, please, by Viscount GREY,
 For ten-and-six," my son,
 You'll say to Messrs. DENT and, they
 Complying, you'll have done
 Than did your Dad, who went to mart,
 A better deal by two
 Whole chapters plus this picture part—
 The Art that DAGLISH drew.

I always pick up a book by Mr. SOMERSET MAUGHAM with pleasurable anticipation. I like the urbane acidity of his temper, which is so much more satisfying and so much more sincere than the cruder cynicism of some of our younger masters. There is plenty of that quality in *Cakes and Ale* (HEINEMANN, 7/6), though it is not, I think, one of his major works. It is a trifle, but a very entertaining trifle. Its theme is that of rather a celebrated little book, Miss CLEMENCE DANE'S *Legend*—the contrast between a distinguished writer as he really was and as he is to be presented in biography. But how different the method! Miss DANE was intensive

and intense; Mr. MAUGHAM is discursive, wandering capriciously back and forth between the 1880's and the 1920's, and, if not disreputable, the cause, or rather the author, of disreputability in others, not least in the Grand Old Man of literature who is his hero. The casual story is in itself an excellent one, but what, one feels, Mr. MAUGHAM had most at heart in writing it was to get his sharp little stiletto into the bladder of literary snobbery. That for him is the deadly sin and, judging by the unsecured proceedings of some of his characters, about the only one. I hesitate to suggest that any living writer should feel his withers wrung by Mr. MAUGHAM'S satire, but it is possible that more than one honoured corpse, could he (or she) read it, might stir a little uneasily in his (or her) grave.

American civilisation, not content with producing machines of almost human sagacity, is now proceeding to



POCKET WIRELESS SETS FOR POLICEMEN.

Malefactor (to his mate). "COME ON, 'ERBERT, WE'RE ALL RIGHT. 'E'S ENGROSSED WIF RACKEMOFF'S PRELOOD."

produce human sagacity with almost every quality of mechanism. Take, for instance, the clever calculated intelligence of Miss DOROTHY PARKER'S *Laments for the Living* (LONGMANS, 6/-). In her infallibly competent hands that sketch has become a snapshot: the glossy surface, the amazing illusion of accuracy, the irresponsible perspective—all are there. As a highly-finished record of modern American life the album is interesting for an outsider to turn over and three of its pictures, "Mr. Durant," "The Wonder: Old Gentleman" and "Big Blonde," have a certain subconscious sympathy (or antipathy) of handling which differentiates them—to me, at least, very gratefully—from their fellows. "Mr. Durant" portrays a gross, mean, conventional business man in a fashion which leaves no doubt that Miss PARKER considers him a toad. "The Wonder: Old Gentleman" gives a memorable picture of a sitting-room below a death-chamber, in which the relations

DRAMATISTS' NOVELS

Maugham and Van Druten

"Cakes and Ale." By W. Somerset Maugham. 7s. 6d. (Heinemann.)
 "A Woman On Her Way." By John Van Druten. 7s. 6d. (Putnams.)

From the novels of expert playwrights one expects, and one usually gets, a nicer sense of form and proportion than can be found in ninety per cent. of modern fiction. The neat handling of a story, the sharp definition of a character and the knowledge of the right moment for revealing a new essential fact are qualities which every successful dramatist must have; and they are qualities which stand clearly out in Mr. Somerset Maugham's new novel, "Cakes and Ale." His "sense of the theatre" is never far distant, as he reveals, through the mouth of one Ashenden, a middle-aged author, the tale of the first marriage of Edward Driffield, a distinguished novelist who had died before the opening of the story.

The action moves on two planes—one in the present day, showing Ashenden pestered by a literary friend for some first-hand reminiscences of Driffield, and the other in the past, as Ashenden recalls, for his own amusement, his memories of Driffield and his first wife. In his modern chapters Mr. Maugham has a good deal of airy badinage about literary fame and the way to achieve it, and in Alroy Kear he presents an amusing caricature of the kind of second-rate novelist whose pertinacity brings success; but the real charm of the book remains in the past, in its views of Victorian village life and of London in the nineties, and especially in its picture of Rosie Driffield, the charming, uneducated and unfaithful wife of the great Victorian novelist. Mr. Maugham has painted her well—so well that she quite overshadows her distinguished husband, as he advances from poverty and obscurity to an assured position in the world of letters. She is shown as a woman whose unfaithfulness was the logical outcome of a naturally affectionate disposition; she is a loyal friend and a good companion; and the reader who learns to see her through the narrator's eyes will find that a thrill of amused pleasure is awaiting him when he reaches the last chapter.

Mr. Maugham has been so much praised for his cynical and unsympathetic portraits that it is almost surprising to find him creating a sympathetic heroine; but his dexterous way of doing it gives colour to the theory that if you scratch a cynic you will find a sentimentalist.

Mr. John Van Druten is also a playwright, but he is not yet on the same level of accomplishment, either in drama or fiction, as Mr. Somerset Maugham; and the particular qualities which ought to be found in a dramatist's novel are sadly lacking in Mr. Van Druten's "A Woman On Her Way." His book will satisfy those who are not yet bored by accounts of liaisons and cocktail parties and by supposedly "smart" conversation; but sophisticated readers will feel that Mr. Van Druten has spoilt a goodish story by overloading it with details.

The character of Elinor Johnson, a rather fatuous woman-novelist, is quite fairly presented, and the account of her two disappointing love affairs and her final acceptance of Richard Gilchrist is good material for a second-rate novel; but it is ruined by the introduction of pages and pages of tedious conversation. When he has learnt to prune his work, Mr. Van Druten may quite easily write good novels, for he has a fair descriptive talent and a certain power in the creation of characters.

Every reader of "A Woman On Her Way" will be delighted by Elinor's youthful secretary, Angela Lane, who makes gentle efforts to impose the nobility of her ideals on Elinor's novels.

It would not be a bad idea if Mr. Van Druten himself had a secretary like Angie. She would probably cross out some of the tiresome expletives which his characters are constantly using, and she might even advise him to put amorous relationships aside when finding a subject for his next novel.

E. H.

MISS GLASPELL'S NEW PLAY

An Omnibus Volume

"Six Plays." 7s. 6d. (Gollancz.)

A banned play, a big success and a notable "flop" are included here—though really "Badger's Green" deserved better luck. The big success, "Street Scene," is speaking for itself at the Globe Theatre, whither I commend my readers; they will find there a difficult production superbly done, with two outstanding qualities: the suspense maintained throughout it by sheer character interest, and the fierce zest for life (or for such happiness as they can extract from life) that these characters display.

"Down Our Street" should be the London counterpart of all this, but somehow falls short of it; its types are faithfully observed and their talk first-rate; only their author lacks the emotional intensity of Mr. Elmer Rice. "Socrates" provides a marked contrast to these two—a thing of cumulative nobility, based on the original texts, and rising steadily to a scene of great beauty and dignity at the philosopher's death. "Green Pastures" is a modern mystery play—the personality of God, seen through negro eyes. Its theme precludes performance here; but no one interested in the modern theatre can afford to miss reading it.

But the pick of the book is the new Glaspell play, "Alison's House." It has two themes: one (hardly more than touched upon) the bitterest lesson that man has to learn—to see his hard-won nobility stultified by forces outside himself; the other, a most intense awareness of old beauty faded. Another American play—Stark Young's "Colonnade"—had some of this second quality; and it is curious that a so much younger land should thus recapture the fine flower of life-in-the-past. The beauty of Miss Glaspell's treatment matches her theme. She has an exquisite tenderness—in her folk, in her dialogue, even in the atmosphere of the old house, which by some magic in her writing grows from the printed page, as surely as though the scene were being staged before us. A rare and lovely play.

G. S.



Miss Susan Glaspell.

From a drawing by D. Nicholson.

us mad: then the great moment when we were both invited to Church Row, and Katherine improvised a pair of cuff-links for my boiled shirt out of four shirt-buttons and a piece of sewing-silk. But the spell had begun to diminish. *Marriage* was a disappointment. We began to feel that there were things about which Wells knew no more than we.

But it is all long, long ago: once upon a time. Pre-war. The war comes like a thick black line ruled clean across the ledger of my account with Wells. We ceased to inhabit the same universe. The later Wells doesn't mean anything to me as the earlier one did. Whose fault is that, I wonder?

Destiny's, I suppose. The final impression made in me by Mr. West's biography of Wells is of a life so fortunate as to be incredible: a fairy tale. It hasn't got a tragic period; neither has Wells' work. One cannot have everything. But I notice that Mr. West, who belongs to a younger generation than mine, feels that something is lacking. I suspect that what Mr. West misses and what I miss is the same thing, even though we might call it by different names.

Yet this review—not Mr. West's book—seems ungenerous to Wells. When a comic genius deigns to visit us, how grudging to object that he is not a tragic genius as well! Plus values only. And what modern author is as rich in these as Wells? Who else has his divine creative secularity? *Kipps* is a masterpiece for ever; and his creator a giant. Is there anything really to equal Chitterlow and Polly since Falstaff? And who can parallel Susan Ponderevo?

"Ol Amjig, George", she would read derisively, "and he pretends it's almond oil! Snap!—and that's mustard. Did you Ever, George?"

"Look at him, George, looking dignified. I'd like to put an old label on to him round the middle like his bottles are, with Ol Pondo on it. That's Latin for Impostor, George—must be. He'd look lovely with a stopper."

J. M. M.

CAKES AND ALE. By *W. Somerset Maugham* (Heinemann) 7s. 6d.

This is Mr. Somerset Maugham's fourteenth novel. He has also written twenty plays. To judge by this novel and the two plays I have seen, the stage diminishes and the novel-form enhances his charm. But he is a master of both crafts. This novel purports to be written by William Ashenden, a novelist, who tells in the first person how as a boy he got to know a queer writer, Edward Driffeld, and his charming,

gay wife, an ex-barmaid. The couple were frowned on by local society, but they won the boy's friendship, in spite of his conventionally snobbish reluctance. The picture of Driffeld and his wife and their kindness to the boy is very subtle. Driffeld's wife runs away from him, and later he becomes famous, and finally the Grand Old Man of English Letters, an O.M., and a genius (for genius, Ashenden explains, is longevity). As an old man, he marries his nurse, and after his death Ashenden is badgered, by the widow and an intolerable prig whom she has commissioned to write the "Life," for details about Driffeld's early days. But he can only shock them with stories of a queer little man who made friends with all and sundry, loved to gossip in public houses, and once decamped without paying his tradesmen's bills, and who was continually betrayed (to his knowledge) by a guilelessly promiscuous wife.

There is undoubtedly a growing tendency to "boost" literature by the inflation of personal and irrelevant interests and to spoon-feed the public with easily digestible literary tit-bits. Mr. Somerset Maugham here administers a corrective dose which will be welcomed by discriminating palates and strong stomachs. His is a refreshing, not a nauseating cynicism, and the brusquely professional manner which makes some parts of his book rather dry is balanced by the sense of character and situation which gives to other parts a charm that is rare in degree and individual in kind.

R. R.

THE HORRORS OF CAYENNE. By *Karl Bartz*. Translated by *Beatrice Marshall* (Constable) 6s.

This is an account of his experiences by a German who spent fourteen years as a convict in the French penal settlement of Cayenne. Some of the incidents are almost certainly exaggerated, but one can accept the book as a genuine document in the main, because any fabricator would have written it with more art. It is a naive catalogue of horrors. The prisoners of Cayenne, it seems, pass their lives in beast-like toil on the plantations, under the command of warders whose mere word can send them to sixty days' solitary confinement, and whose favour they have to buy with gifts of stolen property. The food and quarters are not fit for cattle, and fighting and homosexual vice are the only consolations of the prisoners. Many of them try to escape into Dutch Guiana, but they rarely succeed, because the jungles are thronged by negroes who

MODERN MYSTIC

THE RAZOR'S EDGE. By W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM. Heinemann. 12s. 6d.

Mr. Maugham's new novel is extremely interesting and a pleasure to read. Its theme is very much in line with the imaginative preoccupations of his later fiction generally and indeed, though their presence has not always been observed, of his novelist's work as a whole. "The Razor's Edge" once more poses the question, if one can put it that way, whether there is a higher or more satisfactory principle of human conduct than common sense. Put in another way, the question is simply whether the meaning of existence, if there is a meaning, can be apprehended in rational terms. Or is the nature of what is called reality made known to us only through one or other variety of mystical experience? Out of that habit of speculation, which has grown on a seemingly not very metaphysical-minded Mr. Maugham, a Mr. Maugham who with a hard and often un-pitying honesty, has seemed to take his stand on a Gallic lucidity of thought, almost a Gallic materialism of values, he has produced an immensely craftsman-like, amusing and imaginatively stimulating piece of fiction.

RECOMMENDED

GENERAL

COURTS AND CABINETS. By G. P. GOOCH.

LENINGRAD. By ALEXANDER WERTH.

JUNGLE WARFARE. By MAJOR GENERAL H. ROWAN-ROBINSON.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY. By SIR EDWARD GRIGG.

THREE RUSSIAN PROPHECIES. By NICHOLAS ZERNOV.

JOHN CONSTABLE. By the HON. ANDREW SHIRLEY.

FICTION

FIRST CHOICE:

THE RAZOR'S EDGE. By W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM.

A WOMAN IN SUNSHINE. By FRANK SWINNERTON.

Maugham, who handles his Jamesian method with conspicuous resource. It may not be so good a method, after all, as that available to the uncomplicated and omniscient novelist who never obtrudes himself, but in Mr. Maugham's hands it certainly has its points.

There remains his hero, his philosopher-saint, his all but articulate mystic, a young American by the name of Larry. An airman in the last war, Larry comes back to Chicago disinclined to take a job of any sort and apparently anxious only to loaf. This contempt for money and for making good naturally worries the otherwise radiant Isabel, to whom he is engaged, but eventually she agrees to his going off to Paris for a couple of years—he has always enough money for that—in order that he can make up his mind about things. In the result he still wants nothing so much as to loaf, and they part. And for the next ten years Mr. Maugham as narrator sees nothing of Larry but hears a good deal about him during his comings and goings. Then they meet, move apart, meet again, so that in the end Mr.

Maugham is able to unfold as he will the pattern of Larry's development. This traverses a rich landscape of experience, ranging from coalmining to spells of high life and from Montparnasse bohemianism to a Yogi apprenticeship in Travancore, through all of which Larry learns the detachment of the spirit. In this way he ascends to the summit of the absolute in Hindu philosophy, which is Vedanta, the goal of which, it seems, is liberation from the bondage of rebirth.

Now all this, except for a penultimate chapter of intellectual explanation, is implicit in the action of the story, and as such takes count of familiar human values. But what exactly is to be made of Larry? In his bouts of goodness or simplicity he is, in some sort, an Anglicized or Americanized Myshkin, whose feeling for Nastasia Fillipovna, as it happens, is almost duplicated in Larry's for the unhappy Sophie. Only an Englishman, indeed, could be as sincerely Dostoevskian at this time of day as is Mr. Maugham. Larry, however, is not a tea-drinking Russian and so lacks imaginative validity. "The Razor's Edge," it may be repeated, is in many ways a fascinating book. As a work of art, if one may say so, it is perhaps sentimental. Its worldliness, that is, seems passionately honest, its other-worldliness unreal.

A WOMAN IN SUNSHINE. By FRANK SWINNERTON. Hutchinson. 9s. 6d.

Mr. Swinnerton's latest novel is carefully composed and painstaking in detail. It is not, perhaps, so fast-moving as its ramified style of plot might seem to promise; despite all the complications, as a matter of fact, the pace is curiously halting. Mr. Swinnerton's chief character, the woman in sunshine, is Letitia Boldero, fifty-ish, Kensingtonian, very kind and wise, and in the main it is around her family and other relationships that the story he tells is built up. Monty, her husband, except that he had not been quite brilliantly successful as a barrister and faced a declining practice, presented no insoluble problem, but her three children were another matter. Christine, who masked her sensitiveness by a hard, slangy composure; the normal Mark, who yet had rushed into marriage with the childlike, semi-bohemian Stephanie; Julian, who should have gone off to the United States but secretly stayed in London because he had fallen head over heels in love with Stephanie—they were all, in one way or another, very much in need of what Letitia only could give them. So was her actress friend Constance, married to a clever and disconcerting Gabriel, a playwright, who would not speak a word to his wife of the illness which threatened him. And, not counting Letitia's mother, an exacting ogre of an old lady, and poor Muriel, her sister, who was the ogre's slave, there was a villainous brother of hers to be reckoned with, a shabby, scheming Farringdon, newly arrived in England after an absence of some twenty years.

The way things develop is, on the whole, not very unlike the way they might have been expected to develop. But Mr. Swinnerton, at any rate, intermingles the various threads of the tale with a practised and calculating hand, although towards the end he is inclined to tie a rather fortuitous knot or two. His is not a style of the seemingly spontaneous variety; more obviously in this instance, perhaps,

Miss Norah C. James's "Enduring Adventure" (Cassell, 8s. 6d.) is a war story beginning in the "phoney war" period, with her characters getting bored and slack and with their nerves frayed by inaction, and then rising on the crest of the emotional wave that broke with the invasion of the Low Countries. Gay and her Dick, Allison and Roger Hope, Dr. Green who "went on doing his work"—all the cheerful, brave, mortally afraid *habitués* of the "Red Sun" are here shown in a tense atmosphere that is evenly sustained.

than in other books of his in recent years, his novelist's fancy all through lacks something of impulse. One of the results here is that the emotions of almost all the characters—or at least the expression of them—are much exaggerated. However, Letitia is touched in with nice consistency, there are several small incidents done with a shrewd feeling for character, and for the rest the book is designed in the first place, no doubt, to offer an unspectacular variety of middle-class social and domestic situations. For this purpose it does neatly enough what is required.

THE SEED WAS KIND
By DOROTHY MACARDLE
Peter Davies 8s. 6d.

Diony was the granddaughter of Louis de Chauvigny, who in Geneva in 1937 was nothing less than a voice crying in the wilderness on behalf of the League of Nations, and of a wise, loving, Irish Marguerite. She was also the daughter of Sybil, who was English and cold and artificial, a successful amateur of fashionable gossip and gossipy articles. In Geneva Diony came across Karel, a young Czech writer with a craggy face, and remembered him in London at the time of Munich. After that Sybil had the bright idea of starting a country club and fortifying and provisioning it against the horrors of war, and, war having unluckily broken out, Diony assisted her there for a time. Then, in strictly realistic order, came the fall of France, and a widowed but invulnerable Marguerite turned up in London. Karel was there, too, and so was his angel-faced genius of a violinist cousin, the incomparable Toni. There were all sorts of other refugees besides; there was the blitz; there was Toni's ability, even while Karel alone loved her truly, to persuade Diony to give him, it seems, what did not belong to him.

All this is transparently well meant—the voice crying in the wilderness especially and its numerous tea-party echoes—and it is certainly free from even a hint of unpleasantness. Nevertheless, there is not a great deal to be said for reducing the war and what went before it to the chatty effervescence of these pages. Even if there were signs in the novel of a somewhat larger or wider experience of life, they could not do very much to reconcile anybody but the most innocent reader to so artless a preoccupation with pre-war and war-time political pieties as is exhibited here.

The argument, which in a lightly inquiring and much less rigid, less dogmatic fashion bears some resemblance to Mr. Aldous Huxley's in late years, is somewhat orchidaceously embedded in the soil of the rich, fashionable cosmopolitan society Mr. Maugham describes so well. The characters are mainly American, the scene moves chiefly between the French Riviera and Paris in the years before the war. The entertainment is as shrewd and as sophisticated as Mr. Maugham can contrive; the satirical portrait of the Chicago-born Elliott Templeton, kindly, cultivated and a monster of abject snobbishness, is handsomely done; and there are sparkling minor studies of characters like the roving Suzanne, who as a painter recapitulated the styles of all the lovers she had posed for, and her elderly Monsieur Achille, a paragon of practical good sense. In the sagaciously observed flowering, too, of the elegant and artistically composed personality of Isabel Mr. Maugham is at his most perceptive and assured; while once more, by way of contrast with the instinct for emotional security like hers, he throws in a vista, perhaps a trifle more lurid than in "A Christmas Holiday," of human depravity. And, besides all this, there is the illumination of his first-person style of narrative. The story is told by a peregrinating English novelist named Mr.

FOR LOVE'S SAKE

IF I COME HOME. By NELLISE CHILD. Peter Davies. 9s. 6d.

A previous novel by this author about the seamy side of religious revivalism in the United States a generation or more ago had illuminating force and a nice humanity. "If I Come Home"—the title drags in a last-minute and pointless reference to the American soldier going to the wars—is disappointing. Its satirical picture of fabulously luxurious and idle American womenfolk, who in all seriousness seem to think that heaven is paved with their own cheque-books, is lively and intelligent, at any rate to begin with, and the constant wise-cracking of the young people of the story, again for part of the time if not for all the time, does not lack entertainment. But the rest, it must be confessed, is based upon the convention of the sentimental novelette. Miss Child makes the not very convincing gesture of turning the stock fiction of the beautiful heiress and the poor young man inside out. She might have saved herself the trouble. For although the white foxes, the hereditary garnets, the camellias and assort-

ment of gold lipsticks and the rest win—or, perhaps, win out—in the end, as was only to be expected, the lovely possessor of them all has meanwhile stooped ecstatically to the love of a Sicilian labourer on a W.P.A. job and has experienced "the warm passionate grace of him, the mystery, the hard male strength."

Unreality of this sort in a serious enough and semi-documented setting will not do at all. In a rush of truthfulness Miss Child insists upon the noise and the dirt and the smells to which her twenty-year-old Tony Casino is accustomed, but does not bat an eyelid in plunging the exquisite Brooke in the thick of Tony's home environment. It is all, you see, for love's sake. Making every allowance, however, for the shock of reacting from a degree of super-Hollywood luxury which in the description is almost frightening, it is impossible for a moment to believe in Brooke's behaviour. With the best of intentions, indeed, Miss Child has sentimentalized almost everything to do with poverty.

Author of "Rivers of Glory," "Three Harbours"

F. VAN WYCK MASON

END OF TRACK

With the gift of a real story-teller, Van Wyck Mason has combined all these elements in a novel that has action, pace and romance of a great Western motion-picture and the realism that dies on the cutting-room floor. Ready Thursday 9/-

A new novel by

S. H. LAMBERT

PORTRAIT OF GIDEON POWER

"I think I may fairly say that this Portrait of Gideon Power is also my portrait and your portrait; that it is, in fact, the Portrait of Everyman" Ready Thursday 8/6

JARROLD'S
Publishers (London) Ltd

A Vivid and memorable account of the Fall of Malaya and Singapore

We Built and Destroyed

by DOUGLAS BAILEY

So far there have been very few first-hand accounts of the fall of Malaya and Singapore, but here at last is a record of the whole catastrophe by a writer who has a natural eye for incident and detail. Ready Thursday 10/6

HURST & BLACKETT, LTD

Fascinating Romance

OLIVIA ELLIS

GOLDEN GRAIN

This is the story of a London family as told in six eventful months of their lives. The scene is set in Battersea, the characters are deftly drawn and convincingly alive. Ready Thursday 9/-

Author of "Five Roads Inn"

RICHARD GOYNE

MURDER MADE EASY

"You can't put down a Richard Goyne story until you've read it" is truer than ever of this latest work from his pen. Ready Thursday 8/6

DIANA WILDING

LOVE'S VINTAGE

A new star has flashed into the sky of romantic fiction. Unheralded and unexpectedly, Diana Wilding has entered the first rank of love's story-tellers. (John Long) Ready Thursday 8/6

STANLEY PAUL & CO., LTD

123. Kate O'Brien, review, *Spectator*

CLXXIII, 21 July 1944, 64, 66

Kate O'Brien (1897-1974) was an Irish playwright and novelist, some of whose work was performed in the London theatre before World War II. She published ten novels including *The Ante-Room* (1934) and *The Last of Summer* (1943), and travel books set in Spain and Ireland.

Discriminating novel-readers will sigh with relief to find this present patch of fictional dullness lighted up by a new Maugham—all the more as we had been told by the master some time ago, I think, that he would never again give us a novel. There will be much rejoicing at his change of resolution, and this solid, skilful, accurately calculated book will not only give pleasure and food for reflection to a great number of people, but must also re-stir critical consideration of a formidable talent, a formidable sum of talents.

All who care for the novel seriously must have their blind spots among novelists. Save in some of his shorter pieces, I have never been able to feel any warm enthusiasm for Balzac—since amazement before stupendousness is not at all the same thing as enthusiasm; all through my life I can return at any time to any volume of Turgenev and read it through with something more than my first delight, but I notice that I do not return to Dostoevsky; I read Trollope with admiration, but only with tepid pleasure—there is a difference; and save over the forever enchanting *Emma* I have never been able to become anything approximating to a 'Jancite.' Among the greater of my contemporaries, too, I draw some blanks which very likely do my taste no honour; but whatever the reasons for these they seem to lack correspondence, and do not explain why I am unable to appreciate with full pleasure the maturer works of Mr Maugham. His technique in the construction of a story is almost perfect, I suppose, and he brings all the easier graces to adorn his austere outline; precision, tact, irony, and that beautiful negative thing which in so good a writer becomes positive—total, but *total*, absence of pomposity; he is

never solemn and he is never facetious, and these two seemingly opposed manners are great traps for the pompous. He strips everything down to the reasonable; he is always cool, always detached, and he observes relentlessly.

My trouble is that, accepting the fine accomplishment of his manner, I find I never care for the matter of his books. Often it seems just worldly stuff that has been done as well, or less well, before; but sometimes—as in this new novel—we find that in fact it is serious, with individualism and trouble in its seed, but that Mr Maugham is simply not going to be flurried out of his beautifully finished technique to deal as he should, and could, with its potentialities. This story, for instance, is of a young American man, a brilliant air ace of the 1914-18 war, who returns to Chicago to find that he cannot live the life his rich friends and relatives have mapped out for him there, cannot marry the nice girl he has long been in love with, but cannot at first say more of what he really means than that he wants to 'loaf.' He is, in fact, searching for the good life, the ideal of the saints. He sets out after it, and the pattern of his search is most skilfully woven against the worldly design of the lives of his relations; they, pursuing their supremely materialistic way in Chicago, London, Paris and the Riviera; he, crossing with them often, going his from Montparnasse to a Belgian coal mine, thence *via* a German farm and a Benedictine monastery to the Hindu temples and hermitages of India. He finds what he wants, and goes back to America to be a taxi-driver and try to live like a saint; and his one-time girl and her husband, and all the others of the story, find what they want—for, as the author says, he has written 'nothing more nor less than a success story.' But he has written it from the outside; gracefully, sympathetically, and with a sufficiency of bitterness—but using Larry too easily throughout, as a beautiful symbol, and never attempting to hack down to the bones of the man himself, sprading over all the rest of the story too, and even over Larry a bit, that gloss, that convenient, amusing *chic*, that curious *Champs Elysées décor* which this author finds irresistible and which he does so well; indeed, excessively, sterilisingly well.

A.E.U. LEADERS HEAR YOUNG CRITICS

By Our Industrial Correspondent SOUTHPORT, Thursday. Fifty-two young engineers...

YOUNG MEN'S TURN

THE YOUNG MEN had their turn. For five hours they told the Executive what they thought about factory life...

HOUSES TO BE REQUISITIONED

London boroughs, resuming the practice that was so successful during the blitz...

FRISIANS FAVOURED

The declining popularity of the Shortford breed was discussed at a meeting of the Shortford Society at Oxford yesterday.

POLICEWOMAN AT SEANCE

Under the hearing was resumed at West London yesterday afternoon under the Witness Act...

CHERRY CROP FREAKS

This week-end will see the close of the cherry-picking season in the Shropshire orchards...

PRICES FOR GREENS

Present maximum prices for green vegetables will be continued during the season of 1944-45...

FATHER CORRESPONDENT

A husband cited his father as co-respondent in the divorce court yesterday.

WOMEN ENGINEERS

The National Arbitration Tribunal stated last night that no award had been made regarding the terms on which the women's national schedule of wages in engineering should be revised.

PLAYING FIELDS PLEA

The Hon. Sir Edward Cadogan suggested to the London and Greater London Playing Fields Association yesterday that recreation grounds should be provided as war memorials.

NEW SAVE-PAPER DRIVE

To encourage factory and office workers to save more paper for munitions, a mobile exhibition is about to start from London on a six-month tour of industrial centres.

Obituary

Ida Lady Charles, widow of Capt. Sir Allen Adcock, died in 1936.

POST OFFICE AND TRUSTEE SAVINGS

INTEREST PAID HALF-YEARLY. INTEREST IS SUBJECT TO INCOME TAX, BUT TAX IS NOT DEDUCTED AT THE SOURCE.

SAVINGS BONDS

1960-1970

MORAL INFLUENCE IN FINANCE

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir John Anderson, paid a striking tribute to the Bank of England yesterday...

POLISH PREMIER ON WAY TO MOSCOW

(Continued from P. 1, Col. 4) Armed forces will be under Polish military law. This applies also to civilians...

SOVEREIGNTY SAFEGUARDED

It is clear that the Russian Government has been at pains to spare Polish susceptibilities in every way and scrupulously to safeguard its sovereignty.

NEW OBLIGATIONS

The interplay of public and private finance had led to the development of a mechanism which credit institutions had to follow...

CHILDREN BORN OVERSEAS CITIZENSHIP GRANT

Mr. PLAKE, Under-Secretary, Home Office, announced that the Government was now prepared to issue citizenship grants to children born overseas...

HOUSE OF LORDS

By Our Own Representative WESTMINSTER, Thursday. The Earl of Munster, replying to Lord Addison in the House of Lords to-day...

BURMA HILLS TAKEN

Attacking in plain and mountain-top mists, Allied tanks and infantry have captured more hill positions in the Burma hills...

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SAVINGS BONDS

1960-1970

MP'S PASS MOST CHANCELLOR'S TRIBUTE TO EDUCATION BILL

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS today agreed with nearly all of the amendments to the Education Bill...

DEEP SHELTER DEFEATISM

Mr. MORRISON informed Mr. SUGAR (Soc.) that there were considerable restrictions during the coming winter. There were a number of considerations...

MINISTER'S WELCOME

When Mr. HAROLD JOHNSON, Secretary, Overseas Trade Department, visited the House of Commons...

LOOTING OUTCRY

Mr. MORRISON, replying to Sir Robert Young (Soc.), said that from July 1940, when Defence Regulation 38...

REFUGE OFFER

Mr. LINDSAY (Cons.) asked the Minister whether he would be prepared to consider an advertisement appearing in the Personal column of the Daily Telegraph...

DAY OF PRAYER

Mr. LINDSAY (Cons.) asked whether the date which the fifth anniversary of the war will be observed as a day of national prayer...

PRIVATE BUILDERS TO GET SUBSIDY

Daily Telegraph Reporter Mr. WILKIN, Minister of Health, at the luncheon at the Dorchester Hotel...

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INDEMNITY BILL FOR N.E.S. REGULATIONS

"Don't Exaggerate Looting": Avoid Deep Shelter Mentality: Greek Cleavage. A bill of indemnity relating to the fire service regulations which were not laid before Parliament...

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Books of the Day

NEW FICTION. The Razor's Edge. By W. Somerset Maugham. (Heinemann, 12s 6d.) SUCCESS. A popular novel by the United States...

RAFAEL SABATINI

RAFAEL SABATINI. The story of a young man who determines to find his soul; a study of a latter-day saint seeking the meaning of existence...

U. DELVES BROUGHTON

A Woman in Sunshine. By Frank Swinnerton. (Hutchinson, 9s 6d.) In the Miltonian sense Letitia Boldero has light within her...

EMMELINE MORRISON

So Linked Together. By Michael Harrison. (MacDonald, 8s 6d.) There is little more to be said about this book than that Mr. Harrison has the courage to tell the truth...

Seven Archbishops

Sidney Dark. It is a most skillful writer who has made an art of treating his book...

Colonel Beck and His Policy

Stanislaw Mackiewicz. Through a bold light on the life and thought of Col. Beck and General Smigly-Rydz...

DRIFTING DEATH

HENRY CARSTAIRS. Now a dust-cover, this eventful novel is a study of the life of a soldier who is not content with a simple life...

GIPSIES MARSH

PATRICIA YOUNG. This is a story of a girl who is not content with a simple life...

SETTING OFF

HIGSON. This is a story of a girl who is not content with a simple life...

Prevention and Treatment of Disease in Warm Climates

W. H. HIGSON. This is a story of a girl who is not content with a simple life...

DEBATES BEFORE RECESS

PREMIER'S REVIEW. By Our Political Correspondent. The outstanding event in Parliament next week...

NO EXECUTIONS YET

Of the courts-martial which were being held in Egypt to try those concerned in the Greek military...

BLACK-OUT CONSIDERATION

Mr. MORRISON told Capt. Gamman (Cons.) that he was not in a position to make a statement about a possible relaxation of the black-out...

JOCKEY CLUB'S POLICY ON RACECOURSES

The future policy of Jockey Club regarding the racing of greyhounds...

THE IMPACT AND VALUE OF SCIENCE

DOUGLAS W. HILL, D.Sc. This is a story of a girl who is not content with a simple life...

HUTCHINSON BOOK NEWS. DONALD STOKES. MEN OF VICTORY.

RAFAEL SABATINI. The story of a young man who determines to find his soul...

U. DELVES BROUGHTON. A Woman in Sunshine. By Frank Swinnerton.

EMMELINE MORRISON. So Linked Together. By Michael Harrison.

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JOCKEY CLUB'S POLICY ON RACECOURSES. The future policy of Jockey Club...

THE IMPACT AND VALUE OF SCIENCE. DOUGLAS W. HILL, D.Sc.



"Four hundred and fifty guineas"—GUINEAS, mark you!"

Our Booking-Office

(By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks)

A Blunted Edge

THE title-page of *The Razor's Edge* (HEINEMANN, 12/6) contains a quotation from the Katha-Upanishad—"The sharp edge of a razor is difficult to pass over; thus the wise say the path to Salvation is hard." Although razor's edges are not what they were before the war, they are happily still very far from providing a plausible physical analogy to the broad track along which Mr. SOMERSET MAUGHAM'S youthful American hero ambles towards salvation. *Larry*, an aviator in the last war, leaves the States for France in 1919, preferring to study philosophy at the Sorbonne on a pittance of seven to eight hundred pounds a year rather than join a wealthy firm in Chicago and make a good match. His betrothed follows him to Paris, and he suggests that they shall marry and pursue the search for truth together. "I was reading Descartes the other day," he tells her. "The ease, the grace, the lucidity. Gosh!" Her refusal does not put him out. Nothing indeed puts him out. He is always amiable, charming and, as his affairs with a farmer's widow and an artist's model show, compliant within the limits imposed by his quest for salvation. From India, where he practises meditation and reaches "the realization that the self is one with the supreme self," he returns to Paris. There, in a particularly lurid brothel, he meets Sophie, with whom when they were both in their teens he had read poetry in Illinois. Having lost her husband and baby in a car accident, she has abandoned herself wholeheartedly to every form of vice. *Larry*, steeped in the spiritual wisdom of the East, takes

her out of the brothel, offers her marriage, drags her back into the respectable set she once mixed with, and is mildly surprised, and almost for once put out, when she goes back to her old life and has her throat cut by a transitory lover. "She had a lovely soul, fervid, aspiring and generous," he muses after her murder. "Her ideals were great-hearted." On the other hand, *Elliott Templeton*, an American snob, is pictured with almost as much relish and skill as Alroy Kear in *Cakes and Ale*, and with a tenderness which Kear was not so fortunate as to evoke. It is a pity that Mr. MAUGHAM did not concentrate on *Elliott Templeton*, deleting *Larry* altogether. John Bunyan would have made a mess of *Elliott Templeton*, and, conversely, Mr. MAUGHAM is a surer chronicler of a snob's progress than a pilgrim's.

H. K.

A Prophet to the Rescue

A long, rather unkempt novel—whose apparent insouciance suits its theme, the unsettled Kansas of the 'seventies—*The Locusts* (GOLLANCZ, 12/6), has been vigorously translated from the German of Herr OTTO SCHRAG by Mr. RICHARD WINSTON. Its theme is a red-headed Mormon preacher's vision of the land—the land as a mystic battlefield on which all God's people must needs exhibit their prowess. *Jeremiah Kentrup* has led a hundred of his followers to the reclamation of a desolate plateau; and just when their task looks like succeeding there breaks out a plague of locusts. Along with the locusts come usurers and profiteers, ready to buy the stripped fields from their starving owners. *Jeremiah* starts a crusade to fight the locusts, leaving only just enough land, cordoned by flood and fire, to ensure the community's survival. His mission—as unacceptable to the farmers as to the moneylenders—entails a series of perilous adventures in which a whole Roaring Camp of miners and cowboys play characteristically tough or kindly parts. The dying schoolmistress from whose cowboy husband's wagon *Jeremiah* delivers part of his message, and the French gold-pro prospector whose first nuggets turn up when they dig his grave, are only two of this original novel's picturesque and memorable cast.

H. P. E.

Believing in Whales

Miss DOROTHY GRAY, author of *Hotel Receptionist* (ALLEN AND UNWIN, 8/6), describes a conversation with a small boy who did not doubt mermaids but said, "What I can't believe in is whales." She explains that readers of her very grim book will discover "a great many almost incredible but very real whales," and will tend to fall back on (her own phrase!) "pleasant and plausible mermaids." Well, a certain clergyman once made a slip in a sermon and declared that "Jonah did swallow the whale," and though we would prefer to be on the side of the mermaids and believe the author to be a bit of a Jonah, she guarantees that her facts are true and understated. She describes first-hand experience of different jobs in different hotels for twenty years; and what she has to say about staff conditions, "graft," poor food, long hours, tipping (here one would like to hear about the no-gratuity hotels, though), makes distressing reading. Her book backs Mr. Bevin's reference to sweated industries in his introduction to the Catering Bill, and mentions that the position of staffs with regard to the Factory and Shops Acts does not seem to be clear since, though working hours may be limited, hotel hours cannot be so restricted. It is a marvel that she can write with humour. Even if she could have been unlucky so very many times her book should do good if it makes us more considerate to those who wait on us.

B. E. B.

THE WORLD OF THE FUTURE
BY RICHARD B. HENNING
FIRST PUBLISHED IN NEW STATESMAN AND NATION, N.S. XXVIII,
26 AUGUST 1944, (40)

painstaking romantic snob, with Catholic and discreetly homosexual leanings, whose magnificent but empty career of social success Mr. Maugham paints with lingering tenderness, right down to the wonderful death-scene which is a kind of farewell offering to his old corrupt world of Paris and the Riviera, whose eclipse he would seem here both to acknowledge and to regret.

The flesh appears in the guise of three women: Isabel, Elliot's niece, an admirably drawn American girl, charming and sensitive when first engaged to Larry, but moulded by the conditions of moneyed American life into a chic, beautiful, greedy, heartless woman, typical of all well-dressed, noisy, yet withal warm and honest, machine-tooled cosmopolitans. It is Isabel's tragedy to know that Larry, whom she rejected as a suitor because he was poor, is the only man who really attracts her and can bring out her own potentialities. The two other women are Sophie Macdonald, the type of American girl gone to the bad—drink, drugs, sailors—out of the violence of her disappointment with life; and Suzanne Rouvier, Mr. Maugham's familiar female character, the honest whore. She represents the charm and common sense, the fundamentally worth-while values of French civilization, as contrasted with the depravity of American, as typified by the worldly Elliot, the savage Isabel, the nymphomaniac Sophie, and Isabel's simple, money-making husband Gray. These are the material the young saint (who, however, is also an American) must get to work on. On the whole, he is not a success, for in this pre-sanctity stage, in his commonplace, somewhat priggish, larval form, he is chiefly concerned with getting away from people like these and trying to find the truth by reading and travel, manual labour and meditation. He is enlightened by a holy man in Southern India, and the lovely descriptions of this country make some of the pleasantest reading in the book. They also present Mr. Maugham with his hardest problem, that of conveying the mystical experience, that explosive which has so far defied all rational analysis. I think that, on the whole, for a writer who is not a mystic, he has managed to do this: he conveys well the passionate quest for truth which consumes Larry's whole life and which originates in his

THE ART OF BEING GOOD

A NOTE ON MAUGHAM AND FORSTER

I. The Razor's Edge. By W. Somerset Maugham. (Heinemann, 12s. 6d.)

THIS IS MR. MAUGHAM'S BEST NOVEL SINCE "CAKES AND ALE," and, appearing at a time when the decline in literary quality is fairly matched by the decline in literary taste, it breathes the atmosphere of another world.

The novel is a considerable addition to the literature of non-attachment, and ranks with Huxley's *Grey Eminence* and Heard's *Man the Master* as powerful propaganda for the new faith or, rather, new version of an old faith, which is called by various names—neo-Brahmanism, or the Vedanta of the West—and which has made its home in somewhat macabre proximity to Hollywood. This does not mean that Mr. Maugham "has been converted by Gerald Heard" and so forth, for in all his previous work there has always been a strong inclination to mysticism and an ill-concealed sympathy for those who turn their back on the world. Mr. Maugham's gallery of buns and beachcombers, his sanguine study in *The Moon and Sixpence*, his interest in the Spanish mystics in *Don Fernando* and in various Eastern types of holy man, proclaim this obsession through all his work. He is the worldliest of our novelists, and yet is fascinated by those who renounce the world, whether to do nothing, to become artists, to be a Communist as in *Christmas Holiday*, or a Saint as in *The Razor's Edge*. The book is indeed a study in pre-sanctity in the early years of a man whom the author hints is capable of saving the world, if it will ever listen—and it is part of his sanctity that Larry should be in many ways very like everybody else, a delightful, simple, single-minded Krishnamurti from the Middle West. Since he is to be tempted, we have also pictures of the World and the Flesh: the world in the form of Elliot Templeton, most perfectly drawn of all the characters; the genial, infinitely

experiences as a pilot in the last war, when he made the discovery that "the dead look so terribly dead when they're dead." Thus the moment of faith to which it leads up comes as no surprise. But of what faith? This seems to me the real difficulty: to a sceptical mind it seems doubtful whether human beings actually possess the apparatus which can discover truth, and when they pin it down in a doctrine there is always a sense of disappointment. Now, the neo-brahmins of Hollywood have a doctrine, and that doctrine embraces a considerable amount of Hindu religion and Yoga mysticisms, so Larry has to believe in the transmigration of souls, in Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, and Mr. Maugham's attempt to make this convincing seems far more disastrous than his penetrating criticism of Christianity or the mystical experience which he previously described. A ridiculous hypnotic trick, an example of suggestion, is made use of as a "sign" of power, and the vision of Larry's previous selves also fails to convince. It would have been better for the novel not to have confined Larry to any known religious system: to let him have his revelation and then leave it at that.

The Razor's Edge shows a great technical improvement on the author's recent novels. He handles his four or five characters to perfection, and includes himself—not as a fictional character—but as the flesh-and-blood Willie Maugham of real life, with complete mastery. Here is a novelist right inside his own novel—not a mere stooge or onlooker, or larger than life, as a *deus ex machina*, but on the same plane as all the other characters, not more real nor less—a brilliant feat, carried off with quiet mastery. The too short staccato sentences which often mar his style have also been expanded; there is less of "I have a notion," and the writing is delightfully flexible, vivid and easy. Everything appears haphazard, yet everything is to the point. Maugham is the greatest living short-story writer, and so one expects his handling of plot to force one into a breathless, non-stop reading from the first page to the last, and his character-drawing and observation to be in the fine tradition—but one would not expect to be so captivated by the brilliant fluency of the writing. Here at last is a great writer,

on the threshold of old age, determined to tell the truth in a form which releases all the possibilities of his art. His comments and asides excite us in their justice and sometimes by their raucour. He has, for example, a note of particular asperity whenever there is any question of the standing of writers in the social world. If there is one thing to regret about this novel it is that it is written not for us but for Americans: one detects a considerable amount of playing down to the transatlantic common man and a faintly disapproving attitude to Europe and this country. Mr. Maugham has never been a master of words; he has always preferred the *mot moyen* to the *mot juste*; he is incapable of those flights of vocabulary which we find in the great living stylists: Logan Pearsall Smith, E. M. Forster, Max Beerbolm; but even he should know better than to use "exquisitely gowned" or various slangy expressions (not in dialogue but in the author's musings) which are already out of date. Yet if his book is written for Americans, it is certainly a tract for them! Never have their weak points been so tactfully yet remorselessly suggested—Mr. Maugham never forgets the spiritual dust-bowl which every American carries within him, and which he vainly tries to irrigate with alcohol, statistics, or labour-saving devices. "I have a notion," Mr. Maugham seems to say, "that the new Messiah is going to have his work cut out." Here is his final judgment:

Larry has been absorbed, as he wished, into that tumultuous conglomeration of humanity, distracted by so many conflicting interests, so lost in the world's confusion, so wishful of good, so cocksure on the outside, so diffident within, so kind, so hard, so trustful and so cagey, so mean and so generous, which is the people of the United States.

It has puzzled me, considering the sheer delight that I and all my friends have received from this novel, that it has been so uncharitably reviewed. Are we becoming incapable of recognizing excellence when we see it? I think prejudice is to blame—prejudice against any book which so perfectly recaptures the graces that have vanished, and against any writer who is so obviously not content with the banal routine of self-esteem

and habit, graced by occasional orgies of nationalism and herd-celebrations, with which most of us, from the lovely Isabels and exquisite Elliot Templetons, down to the tame gravel-throwing apes of Fleet Street, fidget away our one-and-only lives.

II. The Undeveloped Heart.

"To write simply," says Mr. Somerset Maugham, "is as difficult as to be good." One might add that to write badly is as natural as to do evil, if we accept Kaudelaire's definition: "Le mal se fait sans effort, naturellement, le bien est toujours produit d'un art."

But supposing the connection is even closer—supposing it were true, as the Victorians and some of the ancient Greeks believed, that to write simply it is necessary to be good; that virtue has the best style—what a burden of right conduct would be laid on the already overburdened tribe of authors! Yet that, I think, is what Mr. Forster believes, and certainly it is the secret of his art. For Mr. Forster, whose great-grandfather was a pillar of the Clapham Sect, is in everything he writes a moralist, a militant tractarian who in all his novels and stories not only blatantly rewards the good and punishes the wicked, but (in a long series of personal asides) distributes marks and awards points on his characters' behaviour and actions.

So much is clear; here in an age whose values are blurred is a writer with a creed—not a creed, like Mr. Maugham's, of oriental fatalism—but a vigorous and clear-cut ethical system. What is not so clear is how it may be defined. But it is through such a definition of this creed that we can best understand Mr. Forster, and a very clear one has just been advanced by Dr. Trilling, an American professor of English literature and author of a book on Matthew Arnold, whose *E. M. Forster* is now published in England by the Hogarth Press.

Sawston-Tonbridge [he writes] may have made Forster miserable, but it gave his thought its great central theme. This is the theme of the undeveloped heart. In his essay, "Notes on the English Character," Forster speaks of the

public school system as being at the root of England's worst national faults and most grievous political errors. For, he says, the faults of England are the faults of the middle classes that dominate it, and the very core of these middle classes is the English public school system, which gives its young men a weight out of all proportion to their numbers and sends them into a world "of whose richness and subtlety they have no conception," a world into which they go "with well-developed bodies, fairly developed minds, and undeveloped hearts."

The theme is almost obsessive with Forster. It is not the unfeeling or perverted heart that absorbs him, but the heart untrained and untutored, the heart checked too early in its natural possible growth. His whole literary effort is a research into this profound pathology.

Bearing this interpretation in mind let us continue our inquiry into Mr. Forster's religion. Here is the first sentence of one of his early stories, a sentence which also illustrates what is meant by writing simply and writing well.

Few things have been more beautiful than my notebook on the Deist Controversy as it fell downward through the waters of the Mediterranean. It dived, like a piece of black slate, but opened soon, disclosing leaves of pale green, which quivered into blue. Now it had vanished, now it was a piece of magical india-rubber stretching out to infinity, now it was a book again, but bigger than the book of all knowledge. It grew more fantastic as it reached the bottom, where a puff of sand welcomed it and obscured it from view. But it reappeared, quite sane though a little tremulous, lying decently open on its back, while unseen fingers fidgeted among its leaves.

"It is such a pity," said my aunt, "that you will not finish your work in the hotel. Then you would be free to enjoy yourself and this would never have happened."

What can we conclude from this passage? First let us notice the rapid vivid impressionist character of the writing. This is typical of all his work. Then the exactness of his observation

and the felicity of his imagery—"like a piece of black slate"—"magical india-rubber stretching out to infinity"—and so on. Then a kind of ascetic delight which is the particular hall-mark of his sensibility: Mr. Forster sees the world not so much as a child but as a poet who is in training, who neither drinks nor smokes nor obscures his vision with any form of self-indulgence; his eyesight is extraordinarily good, whether he is looking at the Blue Grotto or at the hypocrisy which lurks concealed in a cluster of mixed motives. Now we come to the ethical content. What happens in this sentence? A notebook (full of obsolete academic information obtained in a northern university) falls into the blue southern sea and becomes, for the first time in its existence, an object of beauty. The owner of the notebook experiences a sense of release and exhilaration in which the author obviously shares; an Anglo-Saxon aunt, however, misses the point and immediately makes a reproving remark.

Here already is much of Mr. Forster's religion. The notebook is Culture (Culture not so much for its own sake as for some academic preferment), the sea is Life, the owner of the notebook is English Youth, and the Aunt is English governing-class authority. On the next page the naked Italian boatman dives for it, and he will then represent the pagan element of beauty and natural desire. Forster is always on the side of life; always against authority, puritans, prigs, and pedants—he is continually making clear to us the choice between life and the cultivation of class or money, comparing the spontaneous and living with the neatly fossilized dead. For culture-prigs, those who exclaim "procul este profani!" or "oh, what a good boy am I!" he reserves his most vibrant arrows.

His religion, in fact, in its early stage is an Hellenistic paganism in which there are no dualities; death is a friend—beauty and goodness and impulse are one. Youth, helped perhaps by a sensitive old lady, is right, and age, convention, privilege and success are generally wrong. The Aunt (or Uncle), the Italian Diver, the Youth torn between the South and the demands of his family, constantly reappear. One

might say that, Mr. Forster's religion is a primitive pantheistic paganism to which has been afterwards added an oriental preoccupation with non-attachment and abnegation, all worked upon by his inherited moral temperament. Pan is led by conventional English standards of decency to the Krishna of the Bhagavad-gita; the Greek religion whose origins were in the East is traced back to its source.

Dr. Trilling writes at length of one of Forster's short stories, *The Eternal Moment*, which is also one of his most perfect works, stamped throughout with his moral insight, his lyricism, and ascetic vitality. It is an attack on our civilization; on its well-meaning destructiveness and its money-values. Miss Raby, a successful novelist, with an admiring and sensitive friend, Colonel Leyland, returns to the village in which she had once been made love to by her Italian guide. The village, now grown popular through her book, has become a tourist-ridden and corrupt Dolomite capital. The Italian guide has evolved into the concierge of the big hotel: she realizes that, for an eternal moment in the past, she had loved him, and tries to tell him so. The concierge is deeply embarrassed and alarmed by her. Colonel Leyland, even more shocked at her class betrayal, opens his wallet, taps his head and so connives in the idea that she is mad. If we think how Proust, or Maughan, or Hemingway, or other male novelists would have treated this story we see that they would all really have thought such an elderly lady insane, victim of a temporary sexual aberration, and that none of them would have seen anything vile in the colonel's gesture, nor anything inherently ignoble in the concierge's position. To Proust a concierge was a kind of fashionable cardinal. But to Forster, who is a moralist, a concierge is a wicked thing. Miss Raby, who by writing her best-seller has made it possible for the mountain guide to become a plump concierge, has indeed betrayed life, and has every reason to take the blame.

He opened the windows, he filled the match-boxes, he flicked the little tables with a duster, always keeping an eye on the door in case anyone arrived without luggage, or left

without paying. . . . She watched the man spreading out the postcards, helpful yet not obtrusive, alert yet deferential. She watched him make the bishop buy more than he wanted. This was the man who had talked of love to her upon the mountain. But hitherto he had only revealed his identity by chance gestures bequeathed to him at birth. Intercourse with the gentle classes had required new qualities—civility, omniscience, imperturbability. It was the old answer: the gentle classes were responsible for him. It was absurd to blame *Feo* for his worldliness—for his essential vulgarity. He had not made himself.

This leads us on from Forster's ethical to his political sense. For he is a political writer who prefers unpolitical themes: his two best novels, *Howard's End* (which Dr. Trilling says is about "who shall inherit England") and *Passage to India*, are, for all their romantic interest, tales of the barricades and the class war, and Forster, acutely though he sees the weaknesses of the under-privileged, remains unquestionably on their side. What Miss Raby hated about *Feo's* hostelry, the *Grand Hotel des Alpes*, were "the ostentatious lounge, the polished walnut bureau, the vast rack for the bedroom keys, the panoramic bedroom crockery, the uniforms of the officials, and the smell of smart people—which is to some nostrils quite as depressing as the smell of poor ones."

"The uniforms of officials, and the smell of smart people"—all his life Forster will detest these, for he is somewhat more than a liberal in politics: he is a libertarian. Though he believes in original sin and feels the contempt of those who share this belief for those who don't, he also believes in human dignity, courage and freedom—given the right conditions. "Death destroys a man," he says in *Howard's End*, "but the idea of death saves him—that is the best account of it that has yet been given." As a philosopher Forster may be sceptical about progress; as a political being he is much more than sceptical about reactionaries, militarists, millionaires, pharisees, and bureaucrats. We are lucky to possess what amounts to the creed of this artist-philosopher, in his pamphlet *What I*

believe (Hogarth Press, 6d.). He "doesn't believe in Belief," but he does believe in (1) Personal Relations; (2) Democracy; (5) Aristocracy, "an aristocracy of the sensitive, the considerate, and the plucky. Its members are to be found in all nations and classes, and all through the ages, and there is a secret understanding between them when they meet. They represent the true human tradition, the one permanent victory of our queer race over cruelty and chaos."

In his golden pamphlet Forster also mentions what he does not believe in—heroes, great men, leaders, Christianity, asceticism, intolerance, and the State—and here too he enounces his slogan—his act of faith. "The people I respect must behave as if they were immortal and as if society were eternal. Both assumptions are false: both of them must be accepted as true if we are to go on working and eating and loving, and are to keep open a few breathing holes for the human spirit."

In a world of masters and slaves both Maugham and Forster have escaped to the minority of the free. Maugham, the cynic, is sentimental about his hero's goodness; Forster, the progressive liberal, sees virtue warily as something which, so lax have we become, has to be punctiliously enforced, like vaccination. Maugham has bought his freedom through hard work and popular success. "The value of money," he remarks, "is that with it we can tell any man to go to the devil." It is "the sixth sense which enables you to enjoy the other five." Forster's freedom is based on money also, for he has never had to earn his living, but he has also learnt to make do with very little, to purchase freedom through an exacting conscience, a detached passion for the life of the spirit and (this is common to Maugham also) an attitude to the State which can best be described as one of quiet effrontery. Long life to them!

no less a person than Don Quixote. Though the ease of Mr Maugham's style is perfect—and what a delight!—all the way through, the admirable structure a little goes to pieces after the Virgin's second intervention in Catalina's life. But in spite of the faster tempo at the end readers will lay the book down with no sense of fatigue: on the contrary, they will heave a sigh of regret that these Anglo-Voltairean larks do not run to a second volume. A trifle, to be sure, but brilliantly clever and amusing.

130. Orville Prescott, review, *New York Times*

26 October 1948, 29

Orville Prescott (b. 1906) was literary editor of *Eve* magazine 1936–47, a columnist and a lecturer on literature. He was also co-editor of the *New York Times* Books of the Times.

It has been a long time since Somerset Maugham has written a novel as good as *Catalina*, not since *Cakes and Ale*, which was published in 1930. *Catalina* is not nearly as good as that brilliant and maliciously amusing novel; but it is greatly superior to such flabby potboilers as *Then and Now*, *The Hour Before the Dawn* and *Up at the Villa*, and greatly superior also to the pretentious, machine-made mysticism of *The Razor's Edge*. *Catalina* is a gay and light-hearted romance which flirts mischievously with several serious subjects. It cannot be taken seriously and, I'm sure, was not intended to be so taken. But it is a sleekly clever book, a cynically and cold-bloodedly clever book. In the seventy-fifth year of his age Somerset Maugham still regards the human comedy as a diverting spectacle, a suitable target for impudent jests. The tragic elements in it he refuses to regard tragically; the farcical delight him.

After a long and spectacularly successful career as a playwright, short-story writer and novelist, Mr Maugham turned in his declining years to the historical past and produced *Then and Now*, an unfortunately flat tale about Machiavelli and Cesare Borgia. In

CATALINA

London, August 1948; New York, October 1948

Maugham's last novel, set in seventeenth-century Spain, was based on a legend concerning the miraculous, not to be found in his earlier Spanish book *Don Fernando* (1935).

129. Paul Bloomfield, review, *Manchester Guardian*

20 August 1948, 3

Paul Bloomfield (b. 1898) is the author of works of literary and social history, *Imaginary Worlds or the Evolution of Utopia* (1932), *The Many and the Few or Culture and Destiny* (1942), novels and biographies. He was a book-reviewer for the *Listener* and *Time and Tide*.

The article also reviews other fiction.

Catalina might have been written under a Mediterranean sun by a Frenchman, a sceptical deist, a reluctantly renegade Catholic, a member of the Academy. Actually the author is Somerset Maugham. Mr Maugham once said that writing a play was 'as easy as falling off a log.' Reading this diverting 'romance,' as he calls it, one feels that he found writing it no harder than that. *Catalina* is the subject of a miraculous cure in Spain in the Golden Century. The intrigues the event gives rise to are very funny. The gracious shadow of St Teresa falls across her path. Towards the end of the story, when she has been properly married to her Diego, she meets

The First Ten Years

of the British Film, 1896-1906. By Rachel Low and
 Ansell. (Allen and Unwin. 21s.)

Reasons than one, the critics and the historians have always
 seen the British film as the poor relation of the French and the
 Our inventors were later in the field, even if only by
 Latham and Lumière, and our earliest producers less
 than Méliès and Edwin S. Porter. This, perhaps, is why
 seen no critical history of the British film such as Mr.
 Os's *Rise of the American Film*, and why it occupies only
 place in such general histories as that by MM. Bardèche and
 and that by Mr. Paul Rotha.

critical history of the British film has still to be written, but
 the historian will surely be grateful to Miss Low and Dr.
 who, guided by a research committee of the British Film
 have now produced the first volume of what is to be a
 This is not so much history as the raw material for history—
 on the birth and the first ten years of an industry, based on
 records, newspaper files, and interviews with the surviving
 and on the films of the period, based largely on catalogues
 are quoted at too great a length for the scope of the book).

did take determination as well as enthusiasm to read *The*
of the British Film through for fun, though enterprise would
 ch rewards as the discovery that G. A. Smith was filming
 s before D. W. Griffith, and that our own R. W. Paul had
 measure of influence on the great Georges Méliès. This is a
 ough, not for the armchair but for the reference shelf, and
 will not soon be supplanted.

CYRIL RAY.

"O Famous Kent"

by Richard Church. The County Books. (Hale. 15s.)

ic apostrophe in the *Polyolbion* admirably fits Mr. Church's
 ic of the county, and that though he is a Kentish man but
 an of Kent. Yet it is a surprisingly difficult book to review
 the reader's constant inclination to praise it unreservedly
 ceptional literary attainments, its rich historical scholarship,
 oughness of its survey and the generosity of its feeling is
 ecked and embarrassed by what one takes to be errors of
 nt and communication. It seemed that no book could have
 ller measure in the local associations of distinguished men
 is discovered that Thomas Hennell, one of the most devoted
 Kent in all her crowded history, is omitted altogether, while
 Palmer, whose Shoreham paintings so glorified Kent (not
 ts and not in his later period, as Mr. Church says), receives
 f a dozen lines and does not even appear in the index.

of the Kentish personages and their work should the
 " of Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity* be dismissed as "merely
 and faded stuff" or appraisals of the "infamous Rochester"
 npts to "whitewash the surface of a cess-pool"? And I
 hink it is fair to estate agents to ostracise them as "pimps."
 urch's historical reminiscences have the polished ease of

local intimacy, but his bias against mediaeval Catholicism is too
 obtrusive. Superstitious it was, but it did build Canterbury
 Cathedral, and if it has always been "on the side of property," is
 that to be anathematised in days when all property is passing into
 the hands of the State? Mr. Church confuses property in itself
 with its misuse. The personal touch throughout is a flashing weapon
 in his hands, but tends to the excessive, and a poet of Mr. Church's
 calibre should avoid such adjectival lapses as "scent-bleeding."

Mr. Church covers the whole county with such loving diligence
 that his very inadequate treatment of Kentish farming and its local
 crafts like "spiling" is the more regrettable, though he is excellent
 on the hop-gardens. Perhaps another error of judgement is partly
 responsible. Our agricultural past was not merely a "degrading
 serfdom," and he never explicitly mentions wherein the great
 superiority of Kentish agriculture consists, namely in the fullest
 development of the traditional system of mixed farming. He does
 not mention the supreme example not only in Kent but all England—
 the Nackington Farms near Canterbury. This is a fine book, but
 it suffers from a too personal vagrancy of thought; it is very well
 produced but has an abominable map.

H. J. MASSINGHAM.

Fiction

Joy. By Georges Bernanos. (The Bodley Head. 9s. 6d.)

Catalina. By Somerset Maugham. (Heinemann. 10s. 6d.)

Little I Understood. By Joanna Cannan. (Gollancz. 8s. 6d.)

Elephant Walk. By Robert Standish. (Peter Davies. 9s. 6d.)

MR. ALEX COMFORT, in his profoundly interesting book on the
 modern novel, poses a test question: "Is this writer capable of
 recognising a human being?" And, lest there be a doubt as to the
 degree of recognition, he adds, "The responsible writer sees everyone
 naked, and is naked himself." Judged by this test, M. Bernanos is a
 responsible writer. He recognises, he understands, he reveals. I
 think that in one respect he goes beyond Mr. Comfort's requirements,
 in that what he reveals is open to more than one interpretation. There
 is a great difference between this divine ambiguity (if I may be
 allowed so to call it) and the ambiguity that comes from imperfect
 vision or from clumsy handling. Revealing all that can be humanly
 seen, M. Bernanos reminds us, subtly but unmistakably, that we do
 not see everything.

Joy is a study of a saint. A girl, Chantal, the centre of a small
 and decayed community, awaits with awe and impatience the crisis
 for which, from its first page, the book prepares us. She has no
 fear, for she can only "fall into God," but she suffers from suspense
 and from the misunderstandings and the spite of those around her.
 "When, one day, you think yourself lost," her father confessor had
 said, "it will be because your little task is almost done." Chantal
 feels lost; she is looking for the end. Suddenly, terribly, it comes.
 The naked realisation of it is too much for the Abbé Cénabre, who
 "only thought of being his own deliverer, of freeing himself by
 his own efforts."

In this novel—the title is not ironic—M. Bernanos faces some of
 the deepest problems of experience. Saintliness brings out the worst
 in people, as well as the best. Chantal is as bad for some of those
 about her as they are for her. Cunningly they express their resent-
 ment, suggesting to her that the quality which so discomforts them
 may be madness inherited from a grandmother and a mother who
 killed herself. The mad are maladjusted to a three-dimensional
 reality. So is the saint. M. Bernanos believes there is a difference,
 and his book attests it. *Joy* has the best qualities of French writing,
 lucidity, exactness, vision, and a discipline which keeps it always
 within the limits of what can be said. To spiritual certainty and
 human objectivity has been added an all but perfect craftsmanship.

Mr. Maugham is concerned, not with saintliness, but with miracles.
 Catalina, beautiful but crippled, has a vision of the Madonna who
 tells her that she will be healed by "the son of Juan-Suarez De
 Valero, who has best served God." The eldest son, Bishop Blasco,
 is persuaded to attempt the miracle by Dona Beatriz, a proud and
 snobbish lady prioress, who originally entered the order because
 of her hopeless love for him. He fails. The second son, Don
 Manuel, a dissolute soldier, does no better. Catalina's uncle, an
 unfrocked priest with a heart of gold, whom readers of Mr. Maugham
 may feel they have met before, suggests to Blasco that the third
 son, Martin, a baker, is the man to work the miracle. The miracle
 takes place, and wins back for the former cripple her lover, the
 handsome Diego, "a creature of licentious passion." To Diego's
 annoyance, he is obstructed by a miracle every time he seeks to give
 his passion its head. Catalina assures him that these manifestations

Goodbye to
**TRAVEL
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FINANCE AND INVESTMENT

By CUSTOS

only to her virginity. Marriage is essential. A few hours the lovers comment on this.

"It was just as well to make assurance doubly sure," he said. "Trebly," she murmured, not without a certain smug self-satisfaction.

"That is nothing, child," he returned with a very pardonable complacency. "You do not know yet of what I am capable."

At this point Don Quixote and Sancho Panza appear and lead the party to an inn. A troupe of strolling players have lost their leading actress, Catalina takes her place, and presently becomes the greatest attraction of the age. Years later her performance as Mary Magdalen secures the faith of Bishop Blasco, who muses on the inscrutability of God's ways. "Through her He wounded me and through her He healed me." This will, I hope, be a sufficient account of "this strange, almost incredible but edifying narrative"—the author's description—to enable readers to decide whether they are likely to enjoy *Catalina*. Questions of taste apart, how does it fare by Mr. Comfort's standards?

The author of *Ashenden* and *First Person Singular* has always, properly, portrayed character by showing us what people do and say.

This method is wholly successful where the objects of a writer's interest match his talent and the cast of his mind. It has a further advantage in that one can accurately report conduct without understanding its motives. In later years Mr. Maugham has become interested in other aspects of character and experience, the mystic, the visionary, the poetic, where something more than accurate observation is required. In *Catalina* he has followed all his inclinations, some happily, some less than happily. Don Quixote, always a powerful symbol in his mind, emphasises that this is a fairy-tale; some of its values appear uneasy. To vulgarise Mr. Comfort's style, Mr. Maugham sees Blasco naked, but some of the other characters in pants and brassière. At the risk of seeming to lack honour, I shall forget *Catalina*, and continue to admire and respect the author of *Ashenden* and *The Casuarina Tree*.

Miss Cannan dislikes her characters, but without passion. Only when she reaches the avoidable death of a child from peritonitis does her spleen rise to real anger. Then she writes memorably.

I trouble with this very intelligent and readable novel of Oxford is that the characters are abstractions, targets for dislike, rather than living and breathing men and women. Instead of being naked, they wear costumes designed by Miss Cannan. If this is a harsh judgement on a book by a writer who has often given me great pleasure, I beg forgiveness; but Mr. Comfort—and M. Bernanos—must not let me say less.

Elephant Walk, well named, moves with solid tread to a romantic conclusion. When a bull elephant charged the teak bungalow which George built for Ruth, George shot it; but its baby escaped. George is not happy in the bungalow. George's friends are adolescents who play polo on bicycles, and she turns to Geoff. But Geoff wants a wife, not a girl too. Finally the baby elephant, now a full-grown bull, charges the bungalow, knocking over the lamps and setting it on fire.

"My God," said George. "That's the end."

"No, darling," said Ruth softly. "It's the beginning."

It is honest if weighty going. Mr. Standish at least can recognise an elephant.

L. A. G. STRONG.

elephant

THESE are lean days for stockbrokers. Turnover is down to the lowest levels touched for two years or more and few are willing to forecast any early improvement. The explanation is that political and economic influences are conspiring to induce all but the boldest and most optimistic investors to delay their purchases, while at the same time the great majority are unwilling to cut out of the market after its recent fall. Result: stalemate and business almost at a standstill. What is the prospect? Frankly, I do not see any likelihood of the market establishing any real trend, either up or down, until the Berlin problem is solved. There is certainly nothing in the purely economic or financial field which seems at all likely to call for large-scale activity on the part of investors in the near future. My feeling is that even if good news comes from the political front, the average investor—and, most important, the large institutional investor—will not automatically become wildly enthusiastic. Prices would doubtless stage a sharp recovery for a few days as "bear" positions were being closed, but there would then be a pause in which investors would try to get their bearings.

PRICES AND COSTS

In my view, by far the most important single problem now confronting the investor, at least so far as industrial Ordinary shares are concerned, is the relation between costs and prices. Even if it is argued that inflation is likely to raise its ugly head again—a view with which I disagree—it could only take the form of wage inflation, raising the costs of industry, without bringing a corresponding rise in selling prices. That would not spell high profits or high dividends. If, on the other hand, a gradual deflation process, in line with Crippsian ideas, is allowed free play, the chances are that profits will be caught in the scissors of higher costs and stabilised selling prices. There will be considerable variations, of course, in the experience of different industries and individual companies, but the general picture is not alluring. At this juncture the most attractive speculative purchases must be sought in the securities of companies in the liquidation field—coal, overseas railways and the like.

A 4½ PER CENT. YIELD

In present circumstances, in which the scope for obtaining capital appreciation is limited, many investors are understandably seeking safe outlets for idle funds offering reasonably good income yields. To judge from my correspondence, there seems to be a fairly widespread interest in sound fixed interest securities which will give a return of something between 4½ and 5 per cent. Unfortunately, the supply of such shares in the market is far from abundant, and in some instances, e.g., Preference shares of many of the smaller companies, Stock Exchange dealings are so restricted that it is impossible to buy and sell at anything like close prices. A share which should conform to many investors' requirements in this field is the £1 10 per cent. Non-Cumulative First Preference of Waring and Gillow, the well-known West End furnishing stores. Quoted around 42s., these units offer a return of about 4½ per cent.

That might not be very attractive at first sight even for a First Preference in a company whose business in present conditions must be regarded as slightly speculative. The strength of the position is that Waring and Gillow have recently let six upper floors on a 33-years' lease at a substantial rental to the British Electricity Authority. Although the benefit of this arrangement will not be apparent in the accounts for the year ending January 31st, 1949, the full year's rent from that date onward will be sufficient to cover the interest on the company's Debenture stocks, Unsecured Notes and the 10 per cent. dividend on the First Preference stock. It is clear, therefore, that this rental gives high investment status to the Preference units and, in my view, justifies a lower yield basis than 4½ per cent. The only danger could arise from the benefits of the rental being dissipated by losses on the company's ordinary trading as a furnishing concern, but that risk seems very small. Good profits are being earned, and it is a relevant fact that behind the small issue of £125,000 in First Preference stock there is £380,000 of Second Preference stock and a further £180,000 of Ordinary capital.

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MR. SOMERSET MAUGHAM has some claim to be considered the most representative of living English writers. It would be impossible to give a coherent account of the novels, short stories and plays that have appeared during the last fifty years without paying respect to his invention and industry; and he has experimented at the same time in what he himself has called "that part of literature which is known (I have never quite seen why) as *belles lettres*." Continental models have not prevented his work from belonging to the indigenous development of writing in this country. That his books are enormously popular with a wide public goes without saying; and one might risk the generalization—although the grading of highbrows is, naturally, a delicate matter—that highbrows who can see no good in him are on the whole those not ranking foremost in their own hierarchy.

We are not here concerned with Mr. Maugham as a dramatist, except to emphasize that novelist and playwright confined in one body are at perpetual war with each other: and the playwright usually wins. Dramatic technique can be, and often is, of value in constructing a short story; in a novel, unless kept under strict control, it is apt to introduce a nervous tension, occasionally stimulating, more often intensely irritating. Dramatic gifts in a novelist saddle him with a chronic temptation to manipulate his characters in such a way that they make good entries and exits, rather than doing their duty in the state of life to which fiction has called them. In this respect Mr. Maugham cannot wholly escape criticism.

His new novel, *Catalina*, suggests the cinema rather than the theatre, and is far from showing its author at his best. This unaccustomed expedition into the past provides, however, a foundation for discussing his work in general. Its distinctly twopenny-coloured historical setting makes the bones of the narrative more clearly visible, and reveals a characteristic manner of handling moral questions—outwardly cynical, though intrinsically sentimental.

A lady in a blue cloak, apparently the Virgin Mary, appears to Catalina, a Spanish girl recently crippled by a bull; and tells her that she can be healed by "the son of Juan Suarez de Valero who has best served God." This Juan Suarez, an impoverished member of the lesser nobility, has three sons living: Blasco, a bishop; Manuel, a soldier; and Martin, who has abandoned all title to gentility and become a baker. In due course, after the *bona fides* of the miracle have been suitably scrutinized, it is assumed that the miraculous counsel refers to the bishop, famous for his ascetic life and his energy in burning heretics: a surmise naturally strengthened by Blasco's levitation in church while praying for guidance.

The bishop is unsuccessful in curing Catalina; and his brother Manuel suggests that his own distinguished military career in the Low Countries—where he has accounted for far more heretics than his brother at *autos-da-fé*—makes his services proportionately more acceptable to God. Manuel, too, fails to restore Catalina to health; and, after a further supernatural manifestation, consisting of the nocturnal pealing of church bells, there is nothing for it but to test the powers of the third son, Martin, the despised baker. In spite of his unwillingness to make the attempt, Martin effects a cure. Catalina discards her crutch, and once more begins to contemplate marriage with Diego Martinez, a tailor's son, with whom her engagement has been broken off on account of her disastrous accident. At this point the prioress of a local religious house, Doña Beatriz—who as a girl had been in love with Blasco, the bishop, who had loved her in return—considers that Catalina would make a most desirable inmate of her convent. Accordingly she lays elaborate plans to overcome certain obstacles that stand in the way.

The chief of these impediments is that Catalina wants to marry Diego. In a final effort to persuade her to adopt the religious life, Doña Beatriz sends for Catalina and reasons with her. The girl's sudden access of passion in expressing her determination to become a wife reminds the prioress of her own former love for the bishop; with the result that

W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM: *Catalina*. Heinemann. 10s. 6d.

Doña Beatriz, overcome with remorse, arranges for Catalina to make off secretly with Diego. The young couple take to the road, where they fall in with Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, and become strolling players. The book ends with Catalina, married and mother of six children, the most successful actress in Madrid, with Diego as her manager.

It is a little hard to know what to make of all this. Up to the episode of the healing of Catalina the story has a pattern, and records a comprehensible version of the humble and meek putting down the mighty from their seats: the latter, as usual, having the pack pretty heavily stacked against them. We are told little about Martin, the real vehicle of the miracle (though we note that he was "a tidy soul," and recall that Ashenden, too, was "a neat creature"). The rest of the narrative is more than a trifle shapeless, and when we read that "Catalina was not unused to the direct language of her day," we think of Lord George Hell in *The Happy Hypocrite* "clad in Georgian costume, which was not then, of course, fancy dress, as it is now."

However, Catalina does reveal what might be called the essential materialism of Mr. Maugham's literary point of view. When she is crippled, her engagement is at once severed, and it is arranged that Diego should marry a richer girl of outstanding ugliness. This situation compares itself with that of the young French sailor in one of the Maugham short stories, who contracts a rheumatic complaint, and, instead of a pretty girl, has to marry a plain one. The sailor's homely wife is endowed with almost an excess of good qualities; but we are left with the impression that in no circumstances—taking however long a view—could this make up for the loss of a partner in life regarded as desirable by the rest of the world.

It certainly could not be denied that physical beauty plays a considerable part in the relations of the sexes; and there is a great deal to be said for a writer taking a realistic view of human sensuality; but the danger of pushing materialism—and above all this sort of materialism—beyond a certain point is that the balance must be redressed by a strong dose of sentimentality. In its crudest form the working of this law may be seen in the popular novelette or film; but at a far higher level of writing than these, the acceptance of such standards seems invariably to require a similar counterbalance. It might well be argued that, in the case of Mr. Maugham, this approach is sometimes apt enough. In *The Painted Veil*, for example, we accept the author's formula within the triangle he presents—the shallow wife, desiccated husband, and self-important lover. The heroine, after the somewhat harrowing experiences that follow her adultery, remarks to her father that marriage is, after all, no more than a man offering to pay a woman "her board and lodging for life" because of his wish "to sleep with her." This, we feel, is the measure of the people concerned; and there is little to quarrel with in the way things work out in the story.

The episode of the prioress and Catalina, on the other hand, is more doubtful. Clearly there is no reason why Doña Beatriz should not adopt the view that Catalina would be better married than as a nun, at the same time looking back on her own emotional life with a twinge of regret; but this is quite another matter to deciding that the marriage must take place because: "It was sex, nothing but sex, violent and irresistible, sex in its awful nakedness. Suddenly the Prioress's face was contorted in a grimace, a grimace of unendurable agony, and tears poured down her cheeks."

It would not be difficult to find further instances in Mr. Maugham's more solid works of this assumption that marriage is entirely a matter of passion, and that passion is almost entirely a matter of good looks: both postulates resting on decidedly questionable premises. The complicated gradations of community of interest and instinctive attraction seem to play an almost negligible part in the lives of his characters, as does desire to have children for their own sake.

To this criticism it might be objected that *Of Human Bondage* deals in its conclusion with this very subject—instinctive attraction as

opposed to violent passion. The latter part of this long novel is, however, a perfect instance of the irresistible inclination, mentioned above, to sentimentalize (the girl's whimsical father: her own role of romantic peasant) simply because the harsh colouring of passion and worldly success are obviously inappropriate to the circumstance.

Of Human Bondage provides a landmark in Mr. Maugham's writing, from its beginning in 1897 with *Liza of Lambeth*, the cockney flower girl, who looks back to Kipling's *Badalia Herodsfoot* (1893) and perhaps gave a hint to Mr. Bernard Shaw for *Eliza Doolittle* (1912). The novels that immediately followed were not of great interest. *Of Human Bondage*, as it were, cleared away a mass of material—including a remnant of Gissing—that was on the author's mind; and in *The Moon and Sixpence*, its successor, he appears, really for the first time, as master of his own particular brand of story.

Founded on the life of Gauguin, *The Moon and Sixpence* describes how Strickland, a business man, gives up humdrum life to become a painter in the South Seas; treating in detail a theme that recurs in Mr. Maugham's books—the advantages of bohemianism over conventional life. For example, the narrator of the story meets Strickland's legitimate son in the last few pages of the book (now an army padre recommended for a Military Cross), and mentally compares him with the offspring of Strickland's mistress in Tahiti:

They had told me that he was a merry, light-hearted youth. I saw him, with my mind's eye, on the schooner on which he worked, wearing nothing but a pair of dungarees; and at night, when the boat sailed along easily before a light breeze, and the sailors were gathered on the upper deck, while the captain and the supercargo lolled in deck chairs, smoking their pipes, I saw him dance with another lad, dance wildly, to the wheezy music of a concertina. Above was the blue sky and the stars, and all about the desert of the Pacific Ocean.

It would, of course, be unjust to suggest that Mr. Maugham's philosophy of life carries him no farther than contrasting—as a matter of course unfavourably—the lot of an officer in the Chaplain-General's branch with that of a half-caste sailor; but there is nevertheless a tendency in his writing to show people even comparatively successful from a worldly point of view in an unfriendly light; though at the same time accepting—almost naively—on its own terms the temptation held out by a purely worldly existence in its crudest form. No half-tones are allowed. A man must give up the world entirely or become utterly extinguished by its onerous demands. This reasoning, with the violent antitheses in which it results, is again, it seems to us, the price to be paid for a severely materialistic attitude; and when Mr. Maugham strikes a more violent note in the Ashenden stories—dealing with the adventures of a secret agent—he is even more effective than in *The Moon and Sixpence* because he is in a sense less serious.

A thorough discussion of *Ashenden* would entail comparison with the rest of the short stories, of which it is sufficient to say that, in the style of Maupassant, Mr. Maugham is in the first rank. In a short story a taste for somewhat lurid contrasts of behaviour need not be accompanied by the dangers that such handling of character brings in its wake for a novelist; and "Rain," "The Outstation" and "Alien Corn"—to mention only three—could hardly be bettered, each in its different manner. The Ashenden stories are among the best, and the book also crystallizes the character of the author's projection of himself, used with such effect in the next novel, *Cakes and Ale*. This is, indeed, the only novel in which in the action of his characters he avoids a violent collision of moral values: a collision in which he himself, from time to time, seems not unwilling to act as partisan. Paradoxically enough, this lessening of moral tension is brought about by increasing rather than diminishing the share which he himself (in the character of Ashenden) takes in the story: a participation which results in the various relationships in the book being kept within naturalistic (and admirably satirical) bounds.

The story centres on the first marriage of Driffield, a famous writer, recently deceased, to a barmaid called Rosie, whom Ashenden,

(and indeed loved) in former days. Alroy Kear, yet another writer of standing, is anxious to obtain information about Rosie for Driffield's official biography—much as he would like to ignore her existence, because she represents an epoch in Driffield's life inimical to his later fame. Rosie cannot be ignored, however, because all Driffield's best books were written while he was married to her.

In setting out the plot, which begins with Alroy Kear inviting Ashenden to luncheon, Mr. Maugham manages to convey an extraordinarily complete picture of a writer's career and the social side of the literary *monde*. The handling of the changes in time is accomplished with unusual deftness, and Alroy Kear himself is subtly pinned under the microscope. Mr. Maugham is scarcely less successful in the difficult feat of suggesting that Driffield himself was indeed a man of outstanding talent. Rosie, a person of charm though free-and-easy morals, is possibly presented in a somewhat idealized light in the account of her early days; but at seventy she, too, with blood-red nails and plucked eyebrows, is as believable as her unpleasing successor, the second Mrs. Driffield, who begins her letters with the phrase "Dear Friend."

Cakes and Ale is not uncommonly spoken of as Mr. Maugham's greatest achievement. Certainly none of the novels that have followed it reaches the same level of realistic satire. Of these *The Razor's Edge* is the most ambitious in design; but here again we feel that the author is more at home in his picture of the romantically snobbish American and his amiable social excesses than in the record of spiritual struggles with which much of the book is occupied.

Perhaps this somewhat judicial examination is taking *Catalina*—evidently intended as light entertainment—with undue seriousness; is, in short, rather priggish. It suggests, however, a general comment on Mr. Maugham's fiction: that although we can be deeply grateful for the brilliance of the companionship that he has provided in an increasingly prosy world, it may be wise to reserve judgment on the subject of his more didactic moods.

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In response to many readers it has been reprinted in pamphlet form "The English," with *The Times Literary Supplement* August 7.

The pamphlet is at 2d., and can be obtained from the Publisher, The Bodley Head, 1, House Square, London, W. 1. 3d. post free. Copies obtained from the *Times*, New York, N.Y.

SPEECH IN

The shelves become volumes of new poetic reader, and merit in them, is given by his own response they are, in any part they do not, in general clutter or amble of they are the work of sensible persons with sensibility to composition. And yet, oppressed with material, seldom possible to contemporary poetic comfortable sensation has happened. A lit, perhaps; but it way to the necessary.

In the closing part of *The Colloquial Poetry*, Mr. DAY I point at which often flickers and goes to "the most remarkable characteristic, equal in modern poetry, on to the blending, not the of two poetic modes, quotes among others ROBERT FROST's Hardy's *A Gentleman Suit*. Both are additions of the modern poetical in structural form, the form of loose med together by the del of lyric presumption melancholy realism they are typical of poetry in being limited concise expression.

If Frost and Hardy, it is because the colloquial element, but to illustrate; it is careful the larger aim. Moreover, overlooks subordination; it is a note-book, a sketch and presents them jottings more or less together and assumes more likely to inspire than comprehending. There can be little that MR. DAY LEWIS of it:—

There is a time for place for the undiluted I doubt if they are in the press of events, the so rapidly changing world in which we live the poet that he should be responsive, fluid, generous should be biographic; that he make his technique as he may, to mould the contours of modern. For that matter, has never sat easily Mr. DAY LEWIS's Spenser and Milton of every-day speech Pope, certainly, in qualisms, even in the and since the general Wordsworth's poet grand manner has an occasional cadence ironic overtone. It



"Cor! That's not even a quid a foot."

Our Booking Office

(By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks)

G. G. Coulton

Most people as they advance in life insensibly incline to the view that parents suffer more from their children than children from their parents. Miss SARAH CAMPION'S *Father* (MICHAEL JOSEPH, 12/6), a portrait of her father, the late G. G. Coulton, is therefore likely to appeal less strongly to the elderly than to the young and the youngish. Professor Coulton, an inveterate controversialist who spent many years arguing with Chesterton, Belloc and other Catholics about the mediæval church, did not marry until he was forty-six. Both as pictured by his daughter and as revealed in his writings, he was prickly, cantankerous and overbearing; and as more than forty years of his life were passed in the nineteenth century the battles which raged between him and his daughters, and especially, it would seem, Miss CAMPION, were both fierce and incessant. At fifteen Miss CAMPION was so sickened by the superstition and snobbery of churchgoing that she refused to be confirmed. In due course she submitted to the spell of D. H. Lawrence, and taking to novel-writing, expressed herself with a freedom which elicited an unusually tactful letter from her by now perhaps rather exhausted father. The French, he said, were *risqué* in a delicate and allusive way, and would she not follow their example? Underneath this clash of egotisms there was real love on both sides, and the final impression Miss CAMPION leaves of her father is of an essentially affectionate nature, tormented by a disharmony he was never able to resolve.

H. K.

Spring Begins in Autumn.

It is unfortunate that few will pay for necessities what they pay for superfluities—unfortunate both for consumer and producer. Because food struck her as coming under the first head and some, if not all, wars under the second, Miss E. M. BARRAUD put in five and a half years as a land-girl before she was invalided out with rheumatism and ten clothing coupons in 1944. She has already described her experiences in the Cinderella of the Services. *Tail Corn* (CHAPMAN AND HALL, 10/6) tells of a life gallantly restarted with the rheumatism, the clothing coupons, and the seeing eye, deft hand and unconquerable soul of forty-plus. In an overcrowded field—for popular readiness to read about the land is only equalled by popular reluctance to stay on it—her book is outstanding. A child of the Kent-Surrey border, she made her post-war home in the comparatively unsophisticated East Anglia of her war-work. Anything characteristic, from men and women to buildings and birds, from gnarled and lichened apple-trees to gnarled and lichened speech, is grist to her mill. A worker to whom books are "an adjunct to living," she is to be congratulated on having written such a book herself.

H. P. E.

It Happened in Spain.

To so seasoned a traveller as Mr. W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM the long journey from twentieth-century Malaya to sixteenth-century Spain is but a holiday excursion; and it is as a literary holiday excursion that one is inclined to classify the story of *Catalina* (HEINEMANN, 10/6), the beautiful cripple who, cured of her affliction by a miracle, rejects the cloister and potential canonization for matrimony and the hazardous life of a strolling player. It has the air of having been written for fun and, when once it has got well going, which takes rather longer than seems necessary, it is very good fun to read. Mr. MAUGHAM himself calls it a romance, but that description is challenged by an irony which is more proper to the *conte philosophique*: there are pages which might have come out of "Candide." The irony, however, is intermittent, for while it is given full play with Doña Beatriz, the aristocratic prioress who schemes to set up Catalina as rival to no less a saint than Teresa of Avila, her opposite number, the austere Bishop of Segovia, gets a generous measure of sympathy. Once Catalina and her Diego are on the open road we are near the realm of the picaresque, and that of pure fantasy is surely reached when Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, unnamed but unmistakable, put in a personal appearance. Mr. MAUGHAM, in short, might be accused of uncertainty of intention; but that should not spoil enjoyment of a "strange, almost incredible, but edifying narrative." Catalina, with her common-sense and her joy of living, is a delightful creature.

F. B.

Ranger of Texas

The parish of Selborne sufficed Gilbert White. Mr. ROY BEDICHEK takes the State of Texas as hunting-ground for *Adventures With a Naturalist* (GOLLANCZ, 12/6). His theme is "Man, disturber of balances"—from the extermination of the bighorn by the pioneers to the slaughter by contemporary airmen, on behalf of the sheep-raisers, of one thousand, eight hundred and seventy-five golden eagles within two years. Man has been disturbing Nature's balance and is paying for it by sitting on the penitent's bench with a bowl full of dust. (Mr. BEDICHEK'S excellent chapters on fences are ruefully conscience-stricken.) To English readers the book's chief charm is its copious, delightful detail. Inca doves, blue gilia (a flower with a

terrorising the 200,000 eligible voters in Singapore that only some ten per cent. voted in the recent Legislative Council elections. Dr. Purcell believes that 'the inter-racial cleavage in Malaya . . . is far too deep to be bridged by a Marxian appeal to the oneness of the proletariat' and

pins his faith to the ideal of common citizenship in the new federation. May it be so. But one cannot repress a fear that the Malays will ultimately become as unimportant as Red Indians in North America.

Many interesting pages are devoted to Chinese

religion and social habits, schopenhauerism and the famous *mu tsai*; numerous picturesque touches. Among the early colonists in Singapore, never before seen in the time they evidently enjoyed them-

New Novels

Catalina. By Somerset Maugham. Heinemann. 10s. 6d.

Thirty Stories. By Kay Boyle. Faber. 10s. 6d.

The Steeper Cliff. By David Davidson. Cresset Press. 10s. 6d.

ONCE before, when Mr. Maugham, an unwilling young physician at St. Thomas's, had written only a fashionably Gissing-Kiplingish novel about slum-life, and was still learning the business, he decided to write a historical novel. He had read and believed a saying of Andrew Lang, that the historical novel is a good training for the inexperienced writer. 'I wrote it in Capri', he tells us in *A Summing-Up*:

Such was my ardour that I had myself awakened at six every morning and wrote till hunger forced me to leave off and have breakfast. I had at least the sense to spend the rest of the morning in the sea.

For *The Making of a Saint* was a failure: it didn't even sell, and he had written it fifty years too early. 'The historical novel' he concluded later

calls surely for a profound experience of men: to create living people out of those persons who with their different manners and different notions at first sight seem so alien to us, and to recreate the past needs not only a vast knowledge but an effort of the imagination that is hardly to be expected in the young. The novelist should turn to the historical novel towards the end of his career.

Mr. Maugham's career, one hopes, is nowhere near its end, and *Catalina* belongs, in fact, to a group of post-1939 Maughams which, for all their serenity of Indian summer, show a break-away from the old year's closed circle that proclaims June in January. But it is, at last, the mature historical novel which he set aside for his riper age. The earlier attempt was about a Renaissance Italian, who leads a bloody but unbowed life for three hundred pages, becomes a monk in the last three, and is sainted after the book ends. But its fault was not its formal disequilibrium, nor the writer's youth, but the subject's sex. To Mr. Maugham a hero is a man of self-knowledge, without which virtue and courage are vices; and the only creature of that quality he has met and can describe, whether it is Philip in *Of Human Bondage*, or Ashenden, or the narrator in *Cakes and Ale*, is himself, a modern man strictly non-transferable to an earlier century. But the word, when it changes its gender, has quite different connotations: in a heroine self-knowledge can be replaced by instinct, and courage and virtue become less exemplary, but more amusing and quite as instructive; and the matter is one in which Mr. Maugham, an enquiring bachelor, has made himself expert. *Catalina* is *The Making of a Saint* upside down and inside out, sunned with a lifetime of mellowing experience and vastly improved.

Catalina, a crippled girl, is weeping on the steps of the Carmelite chapel in Castel Rodrigo, a town unknown to gazetteers, when the Virgin Mary appears and tells her 'The son of Juan Suarez de Valero who has best served God has it in his power to heal you'. Remembering the voracious fairy tale of the younger son,

we half guess what is to happen. The bishop, who has burned hundreds of heretics, the soldier, who has massacred thousands of Dutchmen for the faith, disgracefully fail, and it is the obscure baker who makes *Catalina* walk again. It is he who has served God best, not by meddling violently with other people's salvation, but by 'cultivating his garden' and assisting Providence in the supply of daily bread. *Catalina* is alone in seeing the moral. The others, misled by faith and reason, those equal enemies of truth, want to make her a nun, with good prospects, if she behaves herself, of ultimate canonisation. She prefers to elope with her lover, and with her flight the movement modulates from peril to idyll. The clouds of smoke from incense and burning heretics clear away, and *Catalina* is riding with Diego through a summer landscape. The blessed Virgin appears a last time to sign the marriage register for the happy couple, and a crazy old knight, with an emaciated horse and a fat squire, mounts guard over their bedroom door.

Mr. Maugham is the only living English writer who knows how to tell a story, and most of the lesser fry who show signs of this ability owe it to intelligent study of their master. By itself this is a barren virtue, and the average Maugham novel reminds one of a bag of those sweets whose base is liquorice: it is impossible not to finish it at a sitting, and impossible not to feel afterwards that one has been eating sawdust. *Catalina* surprises with a reappearance of the distinction of mind which pervades *A Summing-Up*, but has rarely infiltrated into his novels. Its style suffers from his characteristic under-punctuation—he is so justly proud of his clarity that a semi-colon, he believes, is a sign of semi-consciousness, and a comma is nearly coma—but it ventures, successfully, nearer than ever before to the eighteenth-century writers who have always been his models.

Catalina will disappoint only those admirers of Mr. Maugham who demand that he should go on writing the same novel indefinitely, and enjoy, for one reason or another, his preposterous obsession with the Philistinism of the English upper middle class. The novelist who believes most austere in art for style's sake is precisely the most liable to mistake a personal foible for a universal symbol, and *vice versa*. Flaubert was tormented lifelong by the bourgeois, Wilde began a novel which, like all his fiction, was as exclusively a moral allegory as *Pilgrim's Progress*, with the aphorisms 'There is no such thing as a moral or immoral book' and 'No artist has ethical sympathies'. It has taken exile in America to show Mr. Maugham the utter unimportance of the rich morons with whom he spent a generation of fascinated distaste. His association with the Hollywood mystics has suggested the theme, which every important writer should tackle once, of the justification of God's ways to man. He has handled it with Voltairian gaiety and blandness, and has achieved his most sympathetic and

uncharacteristic novel since *Of Human Bondage*.

There was a time when Paris on the seacoast of Bohemia, with its young Americans, fleeing from Philistia and New England Philistia, embarked and obtained an introduction to Gertrude Stein, who, like a Statue of Liberty, was there already. Then they settled down, whose condition Mr. Robert A. Heinemann called 'being geniuses together', to like Miss Boyle, to write. Miss Boyle's stories produce the effect of certain music which is 'off the note'—not, I hasten to say, that the performer is incompetent, but that the composer, from the very heart of his talent, wished to deal in quarter notes, and lo! in its place comes a minute fraction above or below. The ear has been treated to an exquisite sensation, but one which, too often repeated, leaves it permanently on edge. The reality pattern in art has the grandeur of commanding a universal resonance, and writing departs from reality, the result that it should be replaced by a note of equal value: and that is not easy to do. Miss Boyle believes that the departure from reality pays for itself by the disquieting impression of centres of vertigo in the mind. This vaguely aesthetic emotion is to give significance to a lifework. To it, in Miss Boyle, a disinterested and her limited ideal of art, and a sense of literary history. After Hemingway's wonderful but forgotten Harry Cross, the present volume is dedicated to the most important of expatriate writers of the 'twenties': selection gives an excellent opportunity of viewing her best work as a whole, and enjoying one's personal quota of enjoyable but elusive but real powers.

The Steeper Cliff is a study of an official of an occupying power rarely devised a more awkward and a queasy soul than that of setting Germans into black, grey and white, and who asks 'but what colour am I?' and 'they done that I haven't?' becomes more difficult to answer without the aid of a talisman, 'who started it and who remember Belsen', are subject to diminishing returns. This need to better than the enemy forces the hero to run faster and faster in the same place, and he shields his guilty man. He himself, he feels for prison, is guilty: non-technically makes them brothers. *The Steeper Cliff* from being read after Mr. Burns' is an equally fine but more cynical victor's remorse. Why not read it first, if it is not too late? *The Steeper Cliff*. GEORGE

New Novels*

Simon Harcourt-Smith

Here are four mirrors**. Convex in varying degrees, they reflect the marvellous, the miraculous, the “abnormal” and the larger than life. (...)

A distinguished mind playing with the past, clothing it in its own conceits in one thing. A distinguished craftsman putting on fancy dress is quite another. There has lately been discernible in Mr. Maugham. A yearning for Wardom Street finery. First he tries the Bramantesque in *Then and Now*. Next it is Spanish Platesesque in *Catalina*. Yet, Mr. Maugham is fundamentally a survival of easily Edwardian debunking a functionalist among writers, sworn enemy of just such incrustations as overlay the faltering design of *Catalina*. I have likened this “romance” of late sixteenth-century Spain to a mirror reflecting the miraculous. It does so with a vengeance. Eight times, whenever indeed the story seems about to be resolved, there comes an intervention of the Virgin: not the logical magic of a good fairy-tale, so much as the device of the tired script-writer. Indeed, every one of the lay-figures in *Catalina* might have been borrowed from the prop-department of M.G.M. or Universal. No doubt we shall see them back there again one day.

There is something infinitely saddening in Maugham who once could give us such lively pleasure, now churning out this mixture of Charles Kingsley and bad Norman Douglas; one rises with a pang from the flat, cliché-ridden pages - the talk of “grim old palaces” and banners that “flapped lazily.” The time has come to read *The Moon and Sixpence* again.

* Article published in *The New Statesman and Nation*, on 11.09.1948, pg. 244

** In this article, Maugham’s *Catalina* is reviewed together with three other novels, namely, Thornton Wilder’s *The Ides of March*, Charles Jackson’s *The Fall of Valours*, and Chan-Chun Yeh’s *They Fly South*.

NEW NOVELS

by Norah Hoult

CATALINA. W. Somerset Maugham. (*Heinemann*, 10s. 6d. net.)
A CANDLE FOR ST. JUDE. Rumer Godden. (*Michael Joseph*, 8s. 6d. net.)
THE LAND WITHIN. Ignace Legrand. (*Phoenix House*, 10s. 6d. net.)
IN WEDLOCK WAKE. Marion Sturges-Jones. (*Macmillan*, 8s. 6d. net.)
THE LAST FRONTIER. Howard Fast. (*The Bodley Head*, 9s. 6d. net.)
MASTER MARINER. Leo Walmsley. (*Collins*, 9s. 6d. net.)

It is not often that that master of caustic entertainment, Mr. Somerset Maugham, gets lost: when he does it is because he moves away from his own sphere which is definitely of the world, worldly. In *Catalina*, despite the appearance of a more than angelic apparition at the beginning of the book, it looks for a good many pages as if he is going to get away with extra-mundane matters by using the old fairy tale formula. In the fairy tale, you remember, it is the youngest and disregarded son who wins the princess. Mr. Maugham tells us how in the strange days of the Spanish Inquisition there were three brothers: the eldest, an austere bishop responsible for the burning of unrepentant heretics, the second, a soldier, dissolute perhaps, but a brave and formidable foe of the Church's enemies, the third, a humble baker, Martin, who has merely made a good husband, a good father and good bread! The modern reader will, of course, realize that when the Blessed Virgin tells a crippled girl that she will be cured by the laying on of hands of that brother who has served God best, she means Martin! It was, however, more difficult for those who lived in less enlightened times than our own, and there is a nice touch in which the Bishop convicted of his own unworthiness by failing to heal the cripple decides that his sin must be that of showing, on one occasion, mercy to a heretical friend by changing the sentence from the stake to the garrotte!

But after the miraculous cure is accomplished, as if uneasy about such prolonged intercourse with what must remain to him the oddity of the orthodox religious mind, Mr. Maugham rushes us back to solid earth by turning all to sentimental farce in the modern manner. The girl addresses the boy friend as "My sweet", and the high-born Prioress of a convent who has hoped for worldly reasons, and to spite the ashes of St. Theresa of Avila, to make Catalina first into nun and then into saint, is so moved by observing "sex in its awful nakedness" on the maiden's face that she

hurries on the match, and all ends in a haymaking romp quite outstanding in its lack of taste, though ornamented with such period props as Don Quixote.

Sometimes one wonders if all English women novelists have desiccated themselves of emotion, so careful are they to tap their foreheads rather than our hearts. Miss Rumer Godden is a most welcome exception to this rule. She is not ashamed to weep because the past is past, to rejoice because the present has its own romances, and to thrill to old melodies and colours, roses and raptures. Her new book, the story of a once great dancer now teaching ballet up Hampstead way, gives her plenty of opportunity for bestowing bouquets on genius past and present. Madame does not like seventeen-year-old Hilda; she is more than somewhat jealous of her, but it is Hilda who makes her jubilee performance a thrilling success by not only dancing in ballet but creating one. Miss Godden dwells lovingly on every detail of her coloured world, a little too lovingly, I thought, perhaps because I am not a balletomane. But though a trifle more astringency might have been desired it is refreshing to read a novel that is in love with life.

M. Legrand is also an intense writer, but his theme, alas, is a stereotyped one. A brilliant young doctor will pull his career out of bankruptcy only if he marries a vulgar rich girl. But at this moment his old love comes back into his life, only to run away and eventually die when she learns that he is leading a double life. It all ends sadly and badly with the doctor's suicide. Also conventional but in the more modern manner is the American *In Wedlock Wake*. However, this is an unpretentious novel meant for entertainment, and entertain it certainly does when the author gives us her satirical glimpse of the small town rivalries which went on behind the welcome "Bundles For Britain" movement. It is when to manufacture a story she makes the forty-year-old glamour-boy husband walk out, temporarily, on his devoted wife that belief is suspended.

Finally, two novels of action, one American, one British. The American is the more quickly moving, since in *The Last Frontier*, Mr. Fast tells once again, and tells very well, one of those shameful episodes in the white man's "civilized" war against the Indian. Some seventy years ago a remnant of the tribe of Cheyenne Indians broke out from the reservation in which they were being starved to death in an attempt to

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