THE RECEPTION OF
W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM'S WORKS

por
Hélio Dias Furtado

Tese submetida à Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina em cumprimento
Parcial dos requisitos para obtenção do grau de
DOUTOR EM LETRAS
FLORIANÓPOLIS
Dezembro/2000
Esta Tese de Hélio Dias Furtado, intitulada *The Reception of W. Somerset Maugham's Works*, foi julgada adequada e aprovada em sua forma final, pelo Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras/Inglês e Literatura Correspondente, da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, para fins de obtenção do grau de

DOUTOR EM LETRAS

Área de concentração: Inglês e Literatura Correspondente
Opção: Literatura de Língua Inglesa

BANCA EXAMINADORA:

Anelise R. Corseuil
Coordenador

Prof. Dr. Dilvo Ilvo Ristoff
Orientador e Presidente

Profa. Dra. Bernadete Pasold
Examinador

Prof. Dr. José Roberto O'Shea
Examinador

Prof. Dr. Eliane Borges Berutti
Examinador

Prof. Dr. Ubiratan Paiva de Oliveira
Examinador

Florianópolis, 22 de dezembro de 2000.
To my nieces and nephews
Michelly, Gabriela, Débora, Israel, and Gabriel,
hoping that with this work I have somehow
helped to straighten their road.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is inevitable to conclude one’s doctoral studies without an almost endless list of people and institutions one feels obliged to thank. I am not going to mention here everyone I should thank, but I hope that those I omit in the list below understand that in no way I undervalue their cooperation.

CAPES, for granting me the scholarship that allowed me to pursue my doctoral studies.

CNPq, for granting me the scholarship that allowed the one-year stay at the University of Essex, England, where I could carry out the research on Maugham’s critical reception.

Prof. Dr. Dilvo I. Ristoff, for his invaluable advice, support, and understanding as my supervisor.

Prof. Dr. Bernadete Pasold, for her advice and friendship in the initial phase of my doctoral studies

Dr. Elaine Jordan, for her advice and friendship during my stay at the University of Essex

Gilberto Pereira de Melo, for the long time spent as my proxy in Natal.

The administrative staff at Hospital Universitário Onofre Lopes, especially Dr. Ricardo Lagreca, Francisca Zilmar de Oliveira Fernandes, and Maria Teresa Pires Costa, for their understanding and cooperation when I needed them

Nelson Jhoe Batistela, for his long-standing friendship and readiness to help me whenever I need it.

Ednilson Pereira de Freitas, for helping me to deal with the computer problems in the final phase of this work.

The PGI teaching and administrative staff, for their support and assistance while carrying out my studies.
ABSTRACT

THE RECEPTION OF W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM’S WORK

HÉLIO DIAS FURTADO

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA

2000

Supervising Professor: Prof. Dr. Dilvo Ilvo Ristoff

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.
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.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAUSS'S AESTHETICS OF RECEPTION</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Applying Jauss to Maugham</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE RECEPTION OF <em>LIZA OF LAMBETH AND OF HUMAN BONDAGE</em></td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. In the &quot;dark regions&quot; of the empire where the sun never sets</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Attempting to escape from the human bondage</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE RECEPTION OF <em>THE MOON AND SIXPENCE AND CAKES AND ALE</em></td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. An artistic soul looking at the moon</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Revisiting the merry skeleton in the cupboard</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE RECEPTION OF <em>THE RAZOR’S EDGE AND CATALINA</em></td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Trying to cut off the mysteries of life</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Trying to work the last miracle</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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?’”
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*. 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* 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 natural.

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." 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 phases\(^2\). 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:


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.


8 Curtis and Whitehead 1-18.


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. 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. 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.

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.

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" (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,” 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.” 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*.\(^\text{10}\) 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.\(^\text{11}\)

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.”\(^\text{12}\) 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”\(^\text{13}\) (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.  

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 (...)". Like 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.” 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.” 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.” 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". 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.”

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.”

Jauss’s next step is to explain how the pre-orientation of our experience through the capability of literature operates on our aesthetic 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).


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 Critica 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." 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, 1897.

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.”
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 22. 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 it. 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 'issel', an' one 'as ter do one's duty in that walk of life in
which it 'as pleased Providence ter set one – an' every man's first duty is ter
get as many children as 'e bloomin' well can."

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 21st of "The Manchester Guardian". 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.” 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 Lamheth*. This was published in *The Spectator*, in its edition of November 13, 1897, in the
session called *Some New Novels*. Like all the other notes and reviews that *Liza of Lamheth*
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 Lamheth*. 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 “hearty 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 Lamheth* 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].”

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 novels 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 Isaiah. 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."

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.
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.  

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

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.

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 out. 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. 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 stories, 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.

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.

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, 1915. 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 o f 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." Actually, Cordell still adds to Mildred's reputation that "readers have confessed to hissing when she appears on a page."^36

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 review 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 War.

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 *Atheneaum*'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. 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.

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."

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."

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.

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.  

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 *Atheneaum* 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 *Athenæum* 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:


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.


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.


10 Curtis, The Pattern of Maugham 18.


15 Maugham, Liza of Lambeth 111.


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


21 Curtis 19.

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


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.

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.


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.

Cordell 76.

Cordell 76.

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).


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

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.

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 was published in April 1919 and, according to John Whitehead, it marks the beginning of the phase of highest achievement in Maugham's writing career. 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 life. 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". 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.  

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. 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, 1919. 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."

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*. 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, 1919. 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, 1919. 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 novel.
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."

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,
1919 14. 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". 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." 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. 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.

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*. 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 Jones, 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*. 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. 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. Driffield’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,

\[\ldots\] 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 writers\(^{30}\). 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, 1919 31.

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 Driffield, now married to his second wife, together with a duchess and a novel-writing peer. During this visit, there is a moment in which Driffield 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 Driffield and Rosie. The merit of this fact is that Kear is a present friend of Ashenden whereas Driffield 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 Driffield, 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, 1930. 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 Alory 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 Brown. 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.\textsuperscript{44}

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

The final paragraph of \textit{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 \textit{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 perseverence 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 Driffield'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 \textit{Cakes and Ale} was published in the \textit{Daily Express} on its edition of October 7, 1930. This article, entitled "We should be proud of Somerset Maugham," is signed by Harold Nicolson\textsuperscript{35}. As the title suggests, before speaking specifically about \textit{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.'

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.

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 Gaugin 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." 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 unfailing 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 Waugh. 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". 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 others. 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 Driffield 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 Driffield, 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 Kathleleen Tomlinson is one of those Hardy admirers who got offended with the character of Driffield. 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".

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 favorable. 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 merits. 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, Kear's reconstruction of Driffield's life, is stopped too soon. He is disappointed because we never know how Kear 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 Driffield, 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."\(^4\)

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 Jauss in his theory.

NOTES:


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.


6 Curtis 254.


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).


17 Whitehead 81.

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

19 Curtis 101.

20 Curtis 103.

21 Curtis 254.


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


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.


44 Morgan, 344.

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.” In fact, Maugham himself said in an opportunity that it had taken him sixty years to write *The Razor’s Edge*.  

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.”

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. 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.
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 novel. 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, 1944. 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 Fillipovna 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-wordliness 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 one. 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 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 novelist.

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 Turgeniev 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.  

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.

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, 1944. 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 one. 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. Forster.

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 States.

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 Elliot 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 Driffield, 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 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."
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.” 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. 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 crippleness, 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 article. 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. Strong. 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 Maugham. 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.

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 halftones 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 Bickley.

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 2^8.

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.\textsuperscript{29}

It is this assertion that makes Painter conclude that Maugham wrote \textit{The Making of a Saint} at least fifty years early. Besides, it is also what leads him to define \textit{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 \textit{The Making of a Saint} that Painter will proceed with this analysis of \textit{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 \textit{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 \textit{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 \textit{The Making of a Saint} was this anachronism of imposing Maugham’s characteristics on its historical characters.

However, this problem could be avoided in \textit{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 “\textit{Catalina} is \textit{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.” 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.”

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 pursuit 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 austerely 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, Thorton 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 Hoult 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, Hoult 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:


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.”


7 Cordell 38.


12 Maugham, 19.


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)


25 Morgan, 519.


31 W. Somerset Maugham, *Ten Novels and Their Authors* 201.


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." 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.

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. *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." 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."

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 works. 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-sexuality. Being an unintentional and, to some extent, unconscious approach, the way it is done and its influence on Maugham's œuvre 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." 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:


7 Basset 134.

8 Vida 92.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

"Books of the Day - The Moon and Sixpence." Rev. of The Moon and Sixpence, by W. Somerset Maugham. The Observer, 4 May 1919: 4


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


"Fiction." Rev. of The Moon and Sixpence, by W. Somerset Maugham. The Athenaeum, 25 April 1919: 254

"Liza of Lambeth." Rev. of Liza of Lambeth, by W. Somerset Maugham. The Daily Telegraph, 22 Sep. 1897:9

"Liza of Lambeth." Rev. of Liza of Lambeth, by W. Somerset Maugham. Literature, 6 Nov. 1897: 84

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


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


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


Jonas, Klaus W *The Maugham Enigma* (ed.). London: Peter Owen Limited,


Painter, George D. "New Novels." Rev. of Catalina, by W. Somerset Maugham. The Listener, 02 Sep. 1948, XL, 1023: 352

Pereira Oliveira, Maria Marta Laus. A Recepção Crítica da Obra de Marcel Proust no Brasil. Diss., UFRGS.


Rev. of Cakes and Ale, by W. Somerset Maugham. Punch, 29 Oct. 1930, CLXXIX: 503


APPENDICES

Liza of Lambeth: (1897):


4. "Novels" Rev. of Liza of Lambeth by W. Somerset Maugham. The Manchester Guardian, 21 Sep. 1897: 4


7. "Liza of Lambeth." Rev. of Liza of Lambeth by W. Somerset Maugham. Literature, 6 Nov. 1897: 84


Of Human Bondage (1915):


**The Moon and Sixpence** (1919):


Cakes and Ale (1930):


32. Rev. of Cakes and Ale, by W. Somerset Maugham. Punch, 29 Oct. 1930, CLXXIX: 503


The Razor's Edge (1944):


Catalina (1948):


45. Painter, George D. "New Novels." Rev. of Catalina, by W. Somerset Maugham. The Listener, 02 Sep. 1948, XL, 1023: 352


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 productions 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.

---

1. **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 300l 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 'Pubulsh'—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 fast 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 toodling 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-Hero 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.

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. Nor 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.
The Council of War resolved that no regard should be paid to the prime memorial, though it had great esteem for his person, and all due respect and honour for his failure, because he was not even mentioned by Sir George Browning. The stroke of luck there came the capture of the Plate fleet in Vigo Bay to brighten his career, and the subsequent occupation of the land and sea forces co-operated to good purpose. Ormonde landed and took a coast battery in the rear, while Rooke hunted through the boom, and after 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 of Cadiz by the prime 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 put 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 baffle the business. In the result they reported that he "had done his duty, and behaved like a worthy and brave commander, with skill in action."

Sthepston'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 position, 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 the hero's passion or a poetic idea or a psychological study, there is no very exciting demand upon the talents of the author. The sortor tells him his history with care and spirit. It is interesting, if not specially exciting.
brained, romantic, with the help of an old wizard. Antonio, she
braves rascals, punishes mean-spirited, releases prisoners by stra­
gery, outwits her guardian and the lieutenant of police and
notorious highwaymen, and rescues her lover; has a very
good time, in fact, so 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
bravity.

LIZA OF LAMBETH. By W. S. Haugan. 3s. 6d. (Unwin.)

"Vivisection has its advocates, its objectors, and a class
between that cannot object, but would fain limit physical suffer­
ing 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"—speak the truth, which is more respectable than telling senti­
entious, our sense of pity awakened; nay, even only to know
what they are, is so revolting by the torture of which it telU. Probably the least
pitiable and arc excellent shots, and a fair amoimt of human
hate are in a story, so it is not

Mr. Maugham is not such a very small man, either. He
is very clever, and even if he used less loud language his pictures
would still be effective. But he has nothing new to telL This
has been recorded before, and it pains and depresses is
energetic but has not written with more workmanli­
re. "The Awkward Squad" and "By Thrasna River" con­
"The Changer. By Stan F. Bull—er. (Bowden.)

Before giving our opinion about this story we should prefer
to say discreetly 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 the story, his "former work." Indeed, we suspect this is
very early stuff indeed. The plot is made out of the | > o o o r jest
less"—in other scenes, let us hope.

THE CHARMER. By Sarn F. Bull—er. (Bowden.)

THE BOOKMAN. THE "PARADISE" COAL-BOAT. By Caudle Hye, 5s.
(Bowden.)

Mr. Hye 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 (tell of the ruggier,
wilder sides of existence, these tales are neither slanty for slip­
shod. Native vigour has not seemed to him enough to cancel
For a Woman of the South" are all indifferent real not
but the sketch of adventure in Spanish lands, "Journeymen
Smugglers," seems to us the best of all.

PRETTY MICHAL. By Maurice Jokai. Translated by R. Nisbet
Daim. 6s. (Jarrold.)

This is a truly barbaric story—barbaric in its vigour as in its
sanguinariness. Mr. Bain thinks objects to it may be found
among the readers of the amoral fiction of to-day, but it is not
necessary to be amoral to shrink somewhat from this grim
story. Yet in spite of occasional repulsion we have found it the
most irresistible of Jokai's books known to us through transla­
tions. Audacious, fantastic, incredible, altogether alien to our
sense of romance, this tale of old Hungary compels our admira­
tion. From the time the young husband, the pastor of Nagy
Leza, is forced to turn headman the story moves on in a mori­
dance of wizardry and death. In the old archives of Kasssa the
writer found traces of real things, strangely poetical and
terrible, and he has made them live again in this wretched

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
scary 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"," Mai lockdown, 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 Impress of 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
charm, they are also true. Test them by the bit of France
you know best, be it Nancy, or Marseilles, or Carcasson, they
are incomplete, but you will know he has been there. There
are a few telling phrases, such as "The Middle Age was an
anathesis of the Muse," but in general no strain after effect.
And there are a few scraps of personal opinion, and personal melanc­
choly, 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 monarchical, un­
limited, 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 more brusque or merely
virtuous.

ENGLISH EPIGRMS AND EPITAPHS. Selected by Anthony
Stewart. (Clapman.)

This is a pleasant collection, in which mostly all the old
private marriage, two descendants of which, in the third generation—two heirs of that original gift—have married upon Lady Rosalind's marriage. 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 rather odd fellow, much preyed upon by Brodie, the reader is 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 previous title is the rightful heir of the family home. 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 in the narrative with simple realism. There is nothing profound or subtle in the tale, but it is wholesome and natural, and two at least of the characters—the pretty and admirable young person at the vicarage forms the main motif of the story. The account of the trouble there are a number of needless and unpardonable things which have followed the Squire's son to the Crimea—they have all done it by insinuating himself into the Pensive as Lord Melcombe, was a picturesque character enough to incline one to expect much from a novel which adopts him as a leading character. Breathing fully, though compares him to the bowser, as described by Darwin:

"Birds born to strut prepare a platform-stage
With sparkling stones and speckled shells, all sorts
Of lily rubbish, odds and ends, all sorts,
Whereof the pastry and enjoy
The priceless female simper."

With his odd wig, which Hogarth has immortalized, his peacock's feathers and lapis lazuli columns, his bedtide 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 Tempest, 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 little Five Club met and consumed all the Bona Dea. Satanism is rather in fashion among novelists nowadays, but Mr. Creswick handles the Black Mass with a much lighter and more gaily touch than M. Ruyman and his followers. The best thing in his book is his character of Marg, 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.
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 stories; what she has done is to give them a cruder and more lurid setting.

The evolution of many novels may be compared to a sylogism which starts from premises 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 Montmorency's novel, Roundabout Justice, which marks the crossing of the Cross Roads. The plot, though eminently hackneyed, strikes us as extremely improbable and artificial. But its development is not merely ingenuous, but engrossing. Briefly put, the story deals with the tardy regret of Sibella Drake, a woman who 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 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 when his attempt is foiled, he in Paris to take up the 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 could wish Miss Montmorency's law to the moral motives of Mrs. Molyneux's guilty silence seem wholly inade-quate; and we are never made to feel that Jack had in the literary gifts which won him fame before he was five-and-twenty. Finally, though the author has spared no pains, in order to make her novel a protest against a modern social order, the generous nature, the meekness 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 work a loyal rival of Messrs. Weyman and Leverett Yeats, and in his second gave us, in a wholly modern setting, some very clever character studies, reverses 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 Colonel Campbell, who, in the course of events, inherits 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 a home in the Lake Country, 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 can not even fence—a terrible shortcoming in the case of a man who plies for a living in a cathedral city. But conduct in the earlier chapters borders on the contemptible. The whole episode with Mrs. Herbert, again, is rather un- intelligible, but as soon as Lawrence sets about his task of repair 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.
Liza of Lambeth


NOTHING shows less literary taint than this reprint of Somerset Maugham's. It crosses the Thames of combed and curried London to plunge into the squalor of Lambeth. At one end of Westminster Bridge you have an educated England of subtleties and references, of refinement and elision. At the other end you face this primitive, shameless, raw, naked England, this Shakespearean 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 powerful 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—feeling that "a woman's place is at home." 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, indocent, proud, innocent. She can cry, "you jolly well dry up, old jelly belly" 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 Belgravie, and really if it had not been for babies just come or just about to come, and an opportune murder in a neighboring hash-house, there would have been nothing whatever to talk about. As it was, the little groups talked quietly, discussing the atrocitiy 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 reprimand of the wives whose husbands have been beating them, the wild excitement of the melodrama, the magnificent glutony 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 point- ed 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 swirl 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 fallow 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 she 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 babe. Our Father which art in 'eaven. 'Aven't been in London long, 'ave yer?" "M'Kemp," finished Liza, "don't know 'ow one's got the blood of a Briton in one.' "Ah, of Lambeth! It is not only racy and colored, it is sin­glery English, or at any rate deeply human. To have 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 in the romance, it is in the si­nere.

FRANCIS HACKETT.
11x8.7 The Current Numbers afford an excellent instance of the comprehen-

sive character of The Times, 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.

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. Forbes—a labour of one of generosity and self-sacrifice on the part of those who successfully performed the task, but an example of forethought, organization, effort, and resolution truly met with.
is all. There is no meaning to the design (and there Mr Maugham and Philip Carey and the drunken poet Cronshaw, 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.

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 him to Germany, to a London office, to Paris (the Quarter, the art students' life), and backs 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 detail 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

126
has many redeeming qualities. The novel is well written and
provides a unique perspective on the experience of being a
woman and a mother. However, the lack of depth in the
characterization and the overly simplistic portrayal of
motherhood detracts from the overall impact of the novel.

To sum up, "The Red Tent" is a thought-provoking read
that challenges traditional views of motherhood and
women's roles. It is a novel that is not for everyone,
but for those who are interested in exploring different
perspectives on womanhood, it is definitely worth
reading.
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, empathetic 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 Predestined 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 immoral, 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 Goya-esque 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, '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.

**Personaliy 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:
W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM

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 were 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 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 Daghistan 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 exoteric 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 unpunished on its quiet way down the trail to oblivion, while the critics turned to raddle 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-Telegram:

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, vivd 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 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 purpureal 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....
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 horribly 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 schoolboy, 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
To balance her we have another and very different portrait in Philip's aunt, small, tremulous Mrs. Corey, with her pathetic love for a boorish husband and an unresponsive nephew. For those two women alone the look was worth writing. If only there was not quite so much of it!

The eponymous hero of Edwards, by Mr. Barry Pain (Weinfein 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 prospers 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 patience to breaking point. The scenes of this book are laid in Sydney, and when the author—whose name, Lotte 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 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, with a packet of the seed, and sowing it at once, a reviewer is fairly warned before-hand. 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 it was 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 Lustoga, 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 police 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 bluffing 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 Sea Lion's Whelp.

"The Turkish battleship Haiia-el-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 crying about it. Be laudior ad trah ar th art hut."—South Pacific Mail.

Even the printer, you will observe, was affected.
Jookwl Mf)loch nnd Belial and Mammon in
towns tliat Russia would liave to give up
motion,
Still, we eau ut least credit them with a pious
while another goes through ycrtir poeltes.
second i.s tlu> tlio wholo-solo plunder was
On tho following day ho w « - < ; a flaming brand
were liigh liopes of an oi-derly and inde­
wo are assured that they sliot convicted
declared their notion of war. (efut war itself.
the>
throu^h a family dinner party at tho hou­fo of Sir
jKjcupa-
1 . . 4 0£ iu(*i..jtiiiguablc cannon fodder.
will but dimly opjirehend.
to descend into tho trenches and be lost in the uia.ss
ot it that they mo.>most wiilinçly din lest our poor
•self comes on the sccnc all dignity, all poetry i
published a collection of " DocumenUs anil
has shown in etliting tho volume : and for
permanent memorials to theso gallant com­
ment, the son

Mr. Marsh's memoir of Rupert Brooke,
yourd American, which every one will read i
mo^es of literature and those mo%ing page.^
in tho lieight of their promise they had the

Edward Marsh's memoir of Rupert Brooke,
"rouve in the Dutch artist's cartoons, we ha
perhaps is purged, as nobly »b tbciie poets,

the late Mr. Boimderby of Coketown. And

radical Party over Home Rule. Ho was

greatest fun in comjiosiug these elaborate

Mr. Slurroy, whoms fortheoming fiction

Mr. Slurroy. wlmso fortheoming fiction

the world of books) lies in the faihiro to

DOOEI.ES.
The title of Mr. Arnold Lunn's new novel (Hutchinson, 6s. 6d. net) is Looen Eeet. The appropritate criterium of its be com­ 
pressed into the same two words. We Ve been told so many great many things to say, and perhaps 
there will be a great many things to say, and perhaps 
the public will not buy any more discursive, will not buy any more discursive, 
it is necessary for him to give his messages a venuer.

Mr. Lunn really cares about is dis­
putes among the sects, and those who do not like Dickens
for instance. A very interesting book, but it is not
of the late M. Raemaekers and
in the Don Cossack coiunitry, of

cour.se, in the Don Cossack coiunitry, of


Edward Marsh's memoir of Rupert Brooke,
"rouve in the Dutch artist's cartoons, we ha
perhaps is purged, as nobly »b tbciie poets,

the late Mr. Boimderby of Coketown. And

radical Party over Home Rule. Ho was
will bo jiuzzleil or irritated, nnd thoso who

What Mr. Lunn really cares about is dis­
putes among the sects, and those who do not like Dickens
for instance. A very interesting book, but it is not
of the late M. Raemaekers and
in the Don Cossack coiunitry, of


Edward Marsh's memoir of Rupert Brooke,
"rouve in the Dutch artist's cartoons, we ha
perhaps is purged, as nobly »b tbciie poets,

the late Mr. Boimderby of Coketown. And

radical Party over Home Rule. Ho was
will bo jiuzzleil or irritated, nnd thoso who

What Mr. Lunn really cares about is dis­
putes among the sects, and those who do not like Dickens
for instance. A very interesting book, but it is not
of the late M. Raemaekers and
in the Don Cossack coiunitry, of


Edward Marsh's memoir of Rupert Brooke,
"rouve in the Dutch artist's cartoons, we ha
perhaps is purged, as nobly »b tbciie poets,

the late Mr. Boimderby of Coketown. And

radical Party over Home Rule. Ho was
will bo jiuzzleil or irritated, nnd thoso who

What Mr. Lunn really cares about is dis­
putes among the sects, and those who do not like Dickens
for instance. A very interesting book, but it is not
of the late M. Raemaekers and
in the Don Cossack coiunitry, of


Edward Marsh's memoir of Rupert Brooke,
"rouve in the Dutch artist's cartoons, we ha
perhaps is purged, as nobly »b tbciie poets,

the late Mr. Boimderby of Coketown. And

radical Party over Home Rule. Ho was
will bo jiuzzleil or irritated, nnd thoso who

What Mr. Lunn really cares about is dis­
putes among the sects, and those who do not like Dickens
for instance. A very interesting book, but it is not
of the late M. Raemaekers and
in the Don Cossack coiunitry, of


Edward Marsh's memoir of Rupert Brooke,
"rouve in the Dutch artist's cartoons, we ha
perhaps is purged, as nobly »b tbciie poets,

the late Mr. Boimderby of Coketown. And

radical Party over Home Rule. Ho was
will bo jiuzzleil or irritated, nnd thoso who

What Mr. Lunn really cares about is dis­
putes among the sects, and those who do not like Dickens
for instance. A very interesting book, but it is not
of the late M. Raemaekers and
in the Don Cossack coiunitry, of


Edward Marsh's memoir of Rupert Brooke,
"rouve in the Dutch artist's cartoons, we ha
perhaps is purged, as nobly »b tbciie poets,

the late Mr. Boimderby of Coketown. And

radical Party over Home Rule. Ho was
will bo jiuzzleil or irritated, nnd thoso who

What Mr. Lunn really cares about is dis­
putes among the sects, and those who do not like Dickens
for instance. A very interesting book, but it is not
of the late M. Raemaekers and
in the Don Cossack coiunitry, of


Edward Marsh's memoir of Rupert Brooke,
"rouve in the Dutch artist's cartoons, we ha
perhaps is purged, as nobly »b tbciie poets,

the late Mr. Boimderby of Coketown. And

radical Party over Home Rule. Ho was
will bo jiuzzleil or irritated, nnd thoso who

What Mr. Lunn really cares about is dis­
putes among the sects, and those who do not like Dickens
for instance. A very interesting book, but it is not
of the late M. Raemaekers and
in the Don Cossack coiunitry, of


Edward Marsh's memoir of Rupert Brooke,
"rouve in the Dutch artist's cartoons, we ha
perhaps is purged, as nobly »b tbciie poets,
the time that the reader, panting from his struggles in the
maelstrom of mystery, has reached the end of the book,
be well and that two extraordinary robberies, the death of
the financier, the strange conduct of certain people, two attempted
murders, and various other little matters, have been satis-
factorily explained.

7 in, 247 pp, 4/n.

A. A. Milne 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 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 the portraits, 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 DAILY
N.Y., Macmillan Co., 1917. 9 in, 683 pp, il, pors, ind,
21/n.

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
welcomed Daly very badly). There is much that will be welcome
great actress Miss Ada Rehan.

Harris (Joel Chandler). HARRIS, JULIA COLLIER), THE LETTERS AND LETTERS OF JEO
CHANDLER HARRIS. Constable, 1919. 9 in, 601 pp,
maps, ind, 18/n.

The creator of "Uncle Remus" appears in this biography
as one would imagine him—simple, kindly, humorous, uncon
scious of his own talent to an extreme of indifference. On
the other hand, it reveals many qualities that one would not
imagine: a solid critical sense anchored in the common reality,
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 unsparing 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 droll 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. Misfortune (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 Shrew 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 ambivalent 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 Early Bencantine about the earnest
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, violence 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, the story of a man 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 unthinkble. 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 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 out 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—devined 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. "I have no interest in his art in his mind, and to pursue it he was willing to sacrifice not only himself—many can do that—but others. 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 for whose weapon it is a tragic battle, 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.

**BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES**

Mr. W. J. Leightorn, the second part of whose stock is to be sold next week, was interested in one of the binders of his day. His illustrated catalogues, issued at intervals during the last fifteen years, were extremely valuable records—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 London stamped binding with the royal arms of England; a fine fifteenth-century binding; a fine fifteenth-century book, one being of the greatest rarity. America, the early books issued by Proctor, and a few still more interesting as being the earliest prints in their respective places of origin. The earliest offered in the sale is a Proprietis printed in 1472 at Jesi. Admired of English books will find an early Chaucer of 1532; first editions of "Querario," 1813, and of "The Holy War," 1839, a rare Mrs. Margaretta tract, a number of Royal Proclamations, Amadis Greece and King Arthur, and half a dozen other rare romances. Several modern pressings like the Kelmscott and Ashendene are represented. There is a full set of Drayton; a fine copy of Henry VIII. "Assertio Sacramentorum," which belonged to his chaplain and half a dozen of the greatest rarities. A copy of Green's Bow's rare tract (three only printed) is in the British Museum. A still rarer book is Sir Walter Scott's first publish book, "Gowtz of Berlinghen." The chief interest of the sale, however, lies in the fine curiously 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
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 gauntlet by a Dutch painter and his wife, who install 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 Sadism with a vengeance. The life of a beach-comber in the purloins 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 wrecking and gossip about the losses. It was a whirlwind of overwhelming creative desire that caught up Charles Strickland, tore him from his wife, ruined the lives of Stroove 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 spring 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 1830 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 Garden of Eden, where he turned his back after the fall of the Tree of Knowledge, brought to those who care for good writing the

**A WANDERING FANATIC.**

*On the Edge of the World.* By EDMUND CANDLER. (Cassell. 6s.)

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 Gardens of Eden, where he turned his back after the fall of the Tree of Knowledge, brought to those who care for good writing the

**THE MODERN ARTIST.**

*The Moon and Sixpence: A Novel.* By W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM. (Heinemann. 7s. 6d.)

It is interesting to take Mr. Maugham's new novel by itself, not because it is a remarkable book, but

**THE NATION**

*May 31, 1919.*
pioneers, boasts his native "wife" black and blue, and finally dies of leprosy in the bath. Such is the exciting career of the illustrious Strickland. Mr. Maugham is, unfortunately, retentive about the quality of the pictures painted by the great man—Strickland was an odious man, but still a man. His was a work of man who had defied the powers of hate, and which were beautiful and fruitful too. It was the work of a man who knew what to do with his own. There was something primeval there, and strange. It was something more than what we have known as the rejections of black magic. It was beautiful and obscene.

"Mrs. Doe, this is genius," decides the doctor. Something, too, we learn of Strickland's novel color schemes:

"There were purples, horrible like raw and fresh hails; there were yellows, the color of Strickland's mangoes, bananas and oranges, so far as we can judge, a color that we can judge, at any rate, is a beautiful and a natural that clung to happy relationships as the sparkling water of a mountain brook. . . . All that we feel we should like to ask Mr. Maugham is: Why drag his friend's wife and deserts both her and his own, can lay claim to this man? Strickland never lives and breathes through half a page. . . . What is Mr. Maugham driving at? His purpose has been like a lightning stroke, and yet with a glowing, sensual passion that called up vague memories of the Roman Empire of Heliogabalus; . . .

The ordinary stocks of the leading railways of Argentina have recently enjoyed a considerable rise, which in the writer's opinion may be explained in some of the cases by the traffic figures, which, if anything, make a very good showing. The Argentine railways are more or less attributable to the fact that annual reports are diluted with the ideas of the Kowloon G ood s. . . . We have already seen, and the facts do not appear, anything to speak for the usual railway railways from London in look at the traffic on the railway to the spot. Certainly the chief facts in the situation are more hopeful than for some time past.

Two textile concerns have published their reports recently, namely, the British Cotton and Wool Dyers' Association, and the "Burlingtons," and the Five Cotton Spinners and Dollarwine Associations. Both are satisfactory, the latter being chief among them. "Burlingtons" has a good year. "Burlingtons" gross profits for 1918-19 were nearly £250,000, while the net profits were £325,000. The latter are being shared, the profits being £325,000 at £2,500 lower at £325,000 at 10 per cent. Dividends were paid on these profits, and dividends are payable on the latter. The net profit after payment of dividends was £325,000, which is a satisfactory balance of £325,000 against £325,000. This is the director's purposes to a further £325,000 in reserve, and, after payment of the interest on the preferred dividends, to the ordinary shareholders, in the same ratio, to give the ordinary shareholders £325,000.

Mr. Smith-Gordon pleads with co-operativists not to think of 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 principle, of co-operation are absent, he puts in a needed word for the "doctrinaire." Time after time a departure from the rules of co-operation are absent, he puts in a needed word for the "doctrinaire." Time after time a departure from the rules of co-operation are absent, he puts in a needed word for the "doctrinaire." Time after time a departure from the rules of co-operation are absent, he puts in a needed word for the "doctrinaire."
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 part of a muted shadow in a way that in the old days would have roused the derision of the pit. We have better...


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 part of a muted shadow in a way that in the old days would have roused the derision of the pit. We have better...
BROther TO BERT

Charlotte Haldane
Mrs. Haldane has written an engrossing novel upon that essentially fascinating problem (then called) the terror of her country's stolidness and stupidity. July 6

4 THE WHITE PATERNOSTER

T. F. Powys
A book which only the author of "Virtuous Woman," filled with this novel's promises, could have written. August 2

6 ROADS TO GLORY

Richard Aldington
"A book which the author of "Dreadful Virtues" could not have written. July 16

6 THE SECREta BIRD

Daphne Mair
This novel has a South African writing, as bad as Miss Mair's first novel, "A Fable for adults." July 16

6 BANNED IN ITALY

FoRDHAM, New York
The result of these attentions is beautiful. July 16

6 CHATTO & WINDUS

97 & 99 St. Martin's Lane
This novel has a South African writing, as bad as Miss Mair's first novel, "A Fable for adults." July 16

6 THE FOOL OF THE FAMILY

Norman Tillett
"A book which only the author of "Virtuous Woman," filled with this novel's promises, could have written. August 2

6 BIRD WATCHING & BIRD BEHAVIOUR

Julian Huxley
Tie judgments of a keen observer, an able statesman, and an honest man. Illustrated. Make of Modern Europe. September 2

6 CANES AND ALE

If ever there was a romance whose novelist wrote to amuse himself it is CANES AND ALE. It is the story of a Norwegian girl in England, a girl who is beautiful, who is not afraid to live, who is the most impressive things in the book is the boy's treasures most of all; and it is the boy's

6 ELFIN

A.D. 912-920 is a well-known period in English history, when Ealdwulf gives three lines to Elfwin, and about four to the bards of Mercia, and her uncle King Edwige the Unhappy built his new hall at Tamesis, and his uncle to do whatever else is asked of her. She and her love-story fill the picture. But with this insistence on historical details, which inspired his own dreams, in a study of the kind of young woman who will only

6 BIELZHABER

This posthumous novel of Sir Rider Haggard's, BIELZHABER (Stanley Paul, 7d. net), is a book which only the author of "Virtuous Woman," filled with this novel's promises, could have written. July 16

6 BANNEted IN ITALY

If ever there was a romance whose novelist wrote to amuse himself it is CANES AND ALE. It is the story of a Norwegian girl in England, a girl who is beautiful, who is not afraid to live, who is the most impressive things in the book is the boy's treasures most of all; and it is the boy's

6 BANKRUPTCY OR BUSINESS

By NORMAN TILPTF

"Will it be widely read. It is extremely ambitious in conception, and is written with almosl good-with some honest and bad." —BARCLAY ROME, The Daily Express.

6 ELMIN mathews and Marrrot.
NEW NOVELS

Cakes and Ale. By W. Somerset Maugham. Heinemann. 7s. 6d.

Apples be Ripe. By Llewellyn Powys. Longmans. 7s. 6d.

Sawbones. 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 G. O. M., including, however, one or two of 'Our Betters': when his first wife elopes with her (principal) lover.

"Seventeen" provides a most charming picture of life and love in a small provincial town. The world is not yet seen through the rose-tinted glasses of a Freudian since some readers are inclined rather hazily " descriptive special." 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 in Prague, unfurls to Solange Douvieux, 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 Feuchtwanglers, 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和尚 brought out in print. The narrator's narrative is enlightened by his sense of the colour and life in country scenes but defaced 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 axe of proving its moral. Chris Holbech, when running away from his school, must do 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-fulfilmont 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 perception, is not 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 characters are several hundred miles nearer home 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-wobblies with whom "Dos" made us acquainted after a manner nearer artistry in 'The 42nd Parallel.' Here, again, we are in an atmosphere of rough diamondom, 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 Flaneur and the Sunday Worker to hoboing...
CAKES AND ALE
London, September 1930; New York, October 1930

Although the connection between the book's nominal hero Edward Driffield 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.
W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM

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-maid, 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.

186

THE CRITICAL HERITAGE

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 subbits 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.

187
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 Driffield. 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 Driffield 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.

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

THE HOGARTH PRESS
52 Tavistock Square, W.C.I

Autumn Announcements:

AS YOU WERE. By WILFRID BENSON. 7/6
A new novel by the author of Down 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

THE ARMED MUSE.
by G. D. H. COLE
7/6
Mr. Cole has drastically revised his opening chapter, and now gives us what is practically a complete study of Mr. Sackville-West's contributions to the development of Socialist thought.

THE LIFS OF ROBERT OWEN.
by G. D. H. COLE
7/6
This able and illuminating work was first published five years ago by Macmillan, and of this new edition there is reason to hope that it will be a great delight to all who can still loiter about London.

Impressions and Recollections. By Brig.-General F. P. CROZIER. Laurie.
21s.

George Crozier has a lively pen, as was proved by his A Brass Hat in N. M. Sand's N. M. Land, and parts of this book may evoke a reaction 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 could and did attempt to deprive the violent property of the ghostly 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 quarellsome man; but we fancy he was only troublesome when to be easy was to be dishonest and disinterested.

By ROBERT COURNEIDGE.

Mr. Courneidge writes in a pleasant, gossipy vein, and with a modesty rare in autobiographers. He is still remembered as the producer of The Brass Hat, but this relates to his career as a successful theatrical manager than to the astonishing success. He has known most of the well-known actors and actresses of his day from Irving and Toodle to Jack Hulbert and Nellie Melba. He has made money, and has made friends. He has advice to "every stage aspirant" is "Don't be too nervous. There are some good stories in the book, of which the best is a rebuke administered by Mr. Stapleton to "a lady instrumentalist" not to follow his beat: 'Young lady, this is an orchestra—not an elastic band.'

By W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM: Heinemann.
The life of Robert Owen. By G. D. H. COLE.
7/6.
Mr. Courneidge writes in a pleasant, gossipy vein, and with a modesty rare in autobiographers. He is still remembered as the producer of The Brass Hat, but this relates to his career as a successful theatrical manager than to the astonishing success. He has known most of the well-known actors and actresses of his day from Irving and Toodle to Jack Hulbert and Nellie Melba. He has made money, and has made friends. He has advice to "every stage aspirant" is "Don't be too nervous. There are some good stories in the book, of which the best is a rebuke administered by Mr. Stapleton to "a lady instrumentalist" not to follow his beat: 'Young lady, this is an orchestra—not an elastic band.'

7/6.
Mr. Maugham has rarely written a more expert story than this; 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 take himself as such, though his second wife has caused him into cleanliness and reputability. For he was not always reputable. So when Ashenden, who has known him in the ways, is visited by the pompous Alroy Hear, 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 frankness, 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, Byways 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 delightful pencil drawings, and its pleasant, communicative text. Mr. Stapleton has discovered over nine hundred "lanes" in London. These are Londinians who would be out of place to make their 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.
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 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."
Imperial Palace," the hotel itself. This is a curious reversal of rôle. 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 Orham'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 defying 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 dastardly 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 the ccnces to all normal physical relations with her husband, or the willing to break up her home. And there, having slipped from any recognizable anchorage in reality, and lost in a mist of roles. And you have to be mightily interested in fast driving in motors, rather than in people to go so far with Mr. Beimett. Yet 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 ' hame dinner,' Juley's courtship, or the dishonest builder, is amusing. V. S. Pritchett.

THE TICKER TAPE MURDER. By Milton Propper. (Faber and Faber. 7s. 6d.)—In this American mystery story the American manner of behavior in such a situation as the presentation of the American manner as usual. The millionaire who is murdered is quite believable, the detective human and unforced, 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 state 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. Stacey 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 " Malton Cup " ?
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 was the " Good News " at Ainsfield ?
8. Who offered to exchange his estates for a horse ?
9. Who wanted to borrow a grey mare and from whom ?
10. Who was famous for his following at Whaddon Down being: (a) Rose, (b) Bucophalus, (c) Bevis, (d) Bayard.
11. Who was given to his own horses as a meal and by whom ?
12. Who was the " Four-in-hand " ?
13. What famous Scot's gathering cry suggests the winner of one of the post-War Grand Nationals ?

Answers will be found on page viii.
NEW NOVELS

The White Paternoster. By T. F. Powys. (Chatto & Windus. 7s. 6d.)

As You Were. By Wilfred Benson. (Hogarth Press. 7s. 6d.)

The Fate of the Family. By MARGARET KENNEDY. (Heinemann. 7s. 6d.)

The Flame of Ethidroma. 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. (Mundays. 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 longs to the top-hat period. Sex without love, a mental, fertile 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 disturb no one. Why should it in these days of mass production?

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 do. The contrast between these two men is so violent that each sees clearly what may or may not be significant, but is certainly curious, that the supernatural is explicitly or implicitly in these books. Not love, for that would be old-fashioned; nor seduction, for that would be melodrama and longs to the top-hat period. Sex without love, a mental, fertile 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 disturb no one. Why should it in these days of mass production?

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 do. The contrast between these two men is so violent that each sees clearly what may or may not be significant, but is certainly curious, that the supernatural is explicitly or implicitly in these books. Not love, for that would be old-fashioned; nor seduction, for that would be melodrama and longs to the top-hat period. Sex without love, a mental, fertile 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 disturb no one. Why should it in these days of mass production?
The nation & Athenaeum
Page 141

BECKFORDIANA.

The Vision, and Liber Veritatis. By William Beckford. (Cont. 188.)

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: 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 and the people who went in everything. Nouronhah—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 if he had not completed it in the same way as “Outside Literature,” having no psychological interest whatever, is as skilful in one way as they are in another.

Unfortunately, he has not been able to give us profit-and-loss accounts, but he 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 a chronological order, of all ships built at Bristol for the Royal Navy, from the fifth-rate “Islip,” of 1604, 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 1255 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 llprivateer 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 for many eminent privateers, such as that notable Elizabethan sailor, Martin Pring, Woodes Rogers, and his subordinates Edward Haddon and_those interested in 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.

The和地区 called the world's first privateer, John Cadman, in 1627, and the more than 100 ships of war built at Bristol from 1255 to the Great War.

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 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, with a history of the county 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 well printed, including particularly fine ship prints after Nicholas Pocock, from originals in the Bristol Museum. Indeed, Commander Powell and his publishers deserve a hearty vote of thanks from those interested in 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. 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. You and the subject is not, like Beckford's indignation, inexpressible. What saves the book is its amazing purity, 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, the Lordship's uncle, Mr. Collingwood, who married a lady of noble family who went in everything. He was a stroke of irony quite in the author's vein, but a quarter of a century ago, in the capacity of her teacher of the Guitar. This respectable Luianisi 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 conclude: the 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... .

And so on; there is a great deal of it. The grander flights are unhappily too long to quote. Ladies of noble family who went 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 streak of irony quite in the author's vein, but a quarter of an inch beyond reach; nature alone, in a Beckfordian moment, could have managed it.
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 Dagleish 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 back and forth between the 1890’s and the 1920’s, and, if not disreputable, the author of disreputability in others, 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 stablery. That for him is the deadly sin and, judging by the uncensored proceedings of some of his characters, about the only one. I hesitate to suggest that any living writer should feel his wipers wrung by Mr. Maugham’s satire, but it is possible that more than one honoured corpse, could he for 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 produce human sagacity with almost every quality mechanism. Take, for instance, the clever calculated ingeniousness of Miss Dorothy Parker’s *Laments for the Living* (Longmans, 6/-). In her infallibly competent hands the sketch has become a snapshot: the glossy surface, the amazing illusion of accuracy, the irresponsible perspective—all 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 unconscious sympathy (or antipathy) of handling which differentiates them—to me, at least, very gratefully—for 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 sittin-room below a death-chamber, in which the relation-
From the novels of expert playwrights one expects, and one usually gets, a finer 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 banter about literary fame and the way to achieve it, and in Aloye Rear he presents an amusing caricature of the kind of second-rate novelistic 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 Howie Driffield, the charming, uneducated and unsatisfactory 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 amorous pleasure is awaiting him when he reaches the last chapter.

Mr. Maugham has been so much praised for his cynical and unsympathetic portrait that it is almost surprising to find him creating a sympathetic heroine; 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 bored by accounts of liaisons and cocktail parties, for he has a fair descriptive talent and a certain power in the creation of characters.

Miss Susan Glaspell’s new play, an omnibus volume of six plays, has the title of the first: “A Woman On Her Way.” It 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 force outside himself; the other, a most intense awareness of old beauty failed. Another American play—Stark Young’s “Colonnade” —had some of this second quality; and it is curious that so a much younger hand should thus recapitulate the fine flower of life-in-the-past. The beauty of Miss Glaspell’s treatment matches her theme. She has no 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 stagèd before us. A rare and lovely play.

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 nothing more than we.

But it is all long, long ago: once upon a time. Pre-war. The war comes like a thick black line drawn 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 fecundity? 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 Amigo, George", she would read derisively, "and he pretends it's a law all 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 Driffield, 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 Driffield and his wife and their kindness to the boy is very subtle. Driffield'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 with whom she has commissioned to write the "Life," for details about Driffield'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 homosexuality 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
**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 pre-occupation with the meaning of existence, to which the world has been devoted, though their presence has not always been observed of his novelist’s work as a whole. To attempt answering the question, if one can put it that way, whether there is a more satisfactory principle of human conduct than common sense. Put in another way, the question is simple: Do not and may not have, a good enough mind to explain away the difficulties of life, and to make for good naturally worthiness the other forces, with all the love and devotion of Israel, to whom he is engaged, but is entirely enough money for that—so that he can make up his mind about things. In any case he still wants so much to be loved, and that is the reason why in the next ten years Mr. Maugham says nothing of Larry but bears a good deal of him. His mind during his comings and goings. Then the time comes to part, meet again, so that in the end Mr. Maugham is able to unfold as he will this character, the woman in sunshine, is Letitia Swann, of a wise, loving, Irish Marguerite. She was also the daughter of Sybil, who was English of a Sicilian labourer on a W.P.A. job and has in Tony’s home environment. It is all, you see, the goal of which, it seems, is liberation from the bondage of rebirth. ‘The Razor’s Edge’ may be repeated, it is in many ways fascinating book. As a work of one may say, so it is perhaps sentimental. Its wonderful, that is, is its projection of other-worldliness unfelt. 

Now all this, except for a penultimate chapter of intellectual exposition, is implied in the action of the story, and so such take of common sense.”

Maugham is at his most perceptive and astute, while once more, by way of contrast, the life with the lover, the security like hers, he throws in a versus, a troie more lurid than in ‘A Christmas Exhibit,’ of human depravity. And besides this, there is the illumination of his first-person narrative. This is told by a peregrinating English novelist named Mr. Maugham, who handles his Jamaicen method with conscious reserve. It may not be so a good a method, after all, as that available to a novelist, and perhaps he who never obliterates himself, but in Mr. Maugham’s hands it certainly has its points. There remain his Jamesian method of meaningful existence, that all, all but articulate mysticism, a young man, with a rich landscape of experience, ranging from the roving Suzanne, who as a painter represents a magnificent force and a nice humanity. ‘If I Come Home’ is the title of one of Mr. Maugham’s later fiction generally and Miss Norah C. James’s ‘Enduring Adventure’ (Cassell, 8s. 6d.) is a war story beginning in the ‘phlegmatic’ or, perhaps, a rather fortuitous knot or two. His is not a style of the seemingly spontaneous variety; he tells is built up. Monty, her husband, is curiously halting. Mr. Swinnerton’s chief character, the woman in sunshine, is Letitia Swann. In fact, it is perhaps sentimental. Its...
BULGARIA EMERGES

Mr. K. Georgiev, Bulgaria's foreign minister, has announced that Bulgaria will emerge from its occupation by the Allies in the near future. This announcement follows the successful negotiations held by Mr. Georgiev with the Allied representatives. The move is seen as a significant step towards the normalization of Bulgaria's international relations.

A GIFT TO OXFORD UNIVERSITY

The University of Oxford has been gifted a valuable collection of books and manuscripts by the renowned scholar, Dr. John Rocklin, who has been a prominent figure in academia. The items will be a valuable addition to the library's collection, enriching the research and learning opportunities available to students and scholars alike.

THE METHODIST CONFERENCE

Education Bill Praised

The Methodist Conference has praised the Education Bill, stating that it is a significant step towards providing a better education for all. The bill has been acclaimed for its emphasis on equality and the right to education, which has been widely welcomed by the Conference.

RAILWAYS AND UNION COMPANIES' OFFER

An offer has been made by the railways and union companies to provide compensation to workers affected by the recent strikes. The offer includes a package of financial assistance and job training programs to help those affected by the disruptions.

CATHOLIC SERVICE

A special mass was celebrated at the Roman Catholic Cathedral in honor of the victims of the recent strikes. The service was attended by officials from the Catholic Church and local politicians, underscoring the importance of peace and reconciliation.

MISSCELLANY

That Man Again

A new novel by S. H. Lambert, 'Portrait of a Gentleman', is a captivating read that explores themes of love, mystery, and the complexities of human nature. The protagonist, a former soldier, navigates the challenges of life in the post-war era, facing personal and political obstacles. The book is praised for its engaging storyline and well-developed characters.

The Royal Air Force

Volume Two: Ready

Cape Macmillan, N.G. A.C.

Volume II of this excellent history of the Royal Air Force is available, offering a comprehensive look at the development of this vital service. The book is praised for its meticulous research and vivid portrayal of key events, making it a valuable resource for historians and enthusiasts.

The Bank of England

Reginald Sawyer

An insightful account of the Bank of England, one of the oldest and most influential central banks in the world. The book covers its role in the economy, its impact on monetary policy, and its history from its founding in 1694 to the present day.

The Wright Brothers

F. E. Kelly

A biography, written by Evatt, offers a comprehensive look at the Wright brothers, whose pioneering work in aviation revolutionized transportation. The book includes detailed accounts of their early experiments and the challenges they faced, making it a compelling read for aviation enthusiasts.

CROSSWORD No. 1

1. Capital of the East Germany
2. Event when something is spoken
3. Colloquially used for advanced
4. Subject special effect
5. Test or exam
6. Tramp
7. The latest of three or more parts
8. Right to know
9. To make
10. Manipulating by bowing
11. Order to do something
12. Denominate
13. To work
14. To eat
15. The latest of three or more parts
16. Noisy

Solutions to Crossword No. 1

For a complete list of solutions, please refer to the back of the newspaper.
123. Kate O’Brien, review, Spectator

CLXXXIII, 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 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 amusement 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 Turgeniev 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 Janeite. 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 mature 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 fluttered 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; spreading over all the rest of the story too, and even over Larry a bit, that gloss, that convenance, amusing châtre, that curious Champs Élysées décor which this author finds irresistible and which he does so well; indeed, excessively, sterilisingly well.
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-Upanisad—"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 1918, preferring to study philosophy at the Sorbonne on a pittance of seven to eight hundred guineas, mark you! "Four hundred and fifty guineas)—guineas, mark you!" Our Booking-Office

By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks

A Prophet to the Rescue

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 man with a tenderness which Keats or 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-prospector whose first nuggets turn up when they dig his grave, are only two of this original novel's picturesque and memorable cast.

Believing in Whales

To the respectable set she once mixed with, and is 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.

A Prophet to the Rescue

A long, rather unkempt novel—whose apparent inconsequence 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 the 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-prospector whose first nuggets turn up when they dig his grave, are only two of this original novel's picturesque and memorable cast.

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 man with a tenderness which Keats or 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-prospector whose first nuggets turn up when they dig his grave, are only two of this original novel's picturesque and memorable cast.

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 man with a tenderness which Keats or 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-prospector whose first nuggets turn up when they dig his grave, are only two of this original novel's picturesque and memorable cast.

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 man with a tenderness which Keats or 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-prospector whose first nuggets turn up when they dig his grave, are only two of this original novel's picturesque and memorable cast.
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 bums 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-sacriety 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 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 Bouvier, 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 nymphomanic 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-sacriety 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
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-bralminis of Holly-
wood 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 com-
ments and asides excite us in their justice and sometimes by
their rancour. 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 trans-
atlantic 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 not moyen to
the not juste; he is incapable of those flights of vocabulary
which we find in the great living stylists: Logan Pearsall
Smith, E. M. Forster, Max Beerbohm; 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 con-
fllicting 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
THE CONDEMNED PLAYGROUND

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 Baudelaire'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 bluntly 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

THE ART OF BEING GOOD

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-
dulgence; 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 note-
book is Culture (Culture not so much for its own sake as for
some academic preference), the sea is Life, the owner of the
notebook is English Youth, and the Aunt is English govern-
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 sponta-
eous and living with the frankly 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, tips his head and so convives
in the idea that she is mad. If we think how Proust, or
Maugham, or Flemingway, 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
THE CONDEMNED PLAYGROUND

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 Foe 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 Foe's hostelry, the Grand Hôtel 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

THE ART OF BEING GOOD

believe (Hogarth Press, 6d.). He "doesn't believe in Belief," but he does believe in (1) Personal Relations; (2) Democracy; (3) 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, autocracy, 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!
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 intrigue 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 CRITICAL HERITAGE

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 have 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
The First Ten Years

of the British Film, 1896-1906. By Rachel Low and
anovel. (Allen and Unwin, 21s.)

lessons than one, the critics and the historians have always
seen no critical history of the British film such as Mr. 
Church's Rise of the American Film, and why it occupies only

one place in such general histories as that by MM. Bardiche and
that by Mr. Paul Rotha.

Historic history of the British film has still to be written, but
the reader's constant inclination to praise it unreservedly

will not soon be supplanted. Cyril Ray.

Joy, Georges Bernanos. (The Bodley Head. 9 1/2 d.)

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 determined to attempt the miracle by Dona Beatriz, a proud
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
obtrusive. Superstitious it was, but it did build Canterbury
Cathedral, and if it has always been "on the side of property," it
is to be anathematized 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 he is inadequately true to Kentish life in its local
crafts like "spilling" 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
seceding," he never mentions. The superficially pleasant
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. 9 1/2 d.)

Catalina, beautiful but crippled, has a vision of the Madonna who

has the best qualities of French writing, lucidity, exactness, vision, and a discipline which keeps it within the limits of what can be said. "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 to say 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

joy, for she can only "fall into God," but she suffers from suspense

and from the misunderstanding, and 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," it
is to be anathematized 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 he is inadequately true to Kentish life in its local
crafts like "spilling" 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
seceding," he never mentions. The superficially pleasant
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. 9 1/2 d.)

Catalina, beautiful but crippled, has a vision of the Madonna who

has the best qualities of French writing, lucidity, exactness, vision, and a discipline which keeps it within the limits of what can be said. "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 to say 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

joy, for she can only "fall into God," but she suffers from suspense

and from the misunderstanding, and 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," it
is to be anathematized 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 he is inadequately true to Kentish life in its local
crafts like "spilling" 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
seceding," he never mentions. The superficially pleasant
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. 9 1/2 d.)

Catalina, beautiful but crippled, has a vision of the Madonna who

has the best qualities of French writing, lucidity, exactness, vision, and a discipline which keeps it within the limits of what can be said. "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 to say 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

joy, for she can only "fall into God," but she suffers from suspense

and from the misunderstanding, and 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," it
is to be anathematized 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 he is inadequately true to Kentish life in its local
crafts like "spilling" 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
seceding," he never mentions. The superficially pleasant
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.
the 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.

"Truly," she murmured, not without a certain smug self-satisfaction.

"That is nothing, child," he returned with a very pardonable inaccuracy. "You do not know yet of what I am capable."

This point Don Quixote and Sancho Panza appear and lead the J 3an. A troupe of strolling players have lost their leading Catalina takes her place, and presently becomes the greatest of the age. Years later her performance as Mary Magdalen has the faith of Bishop Blasco, who muses on the inscrutability of god's ways. "Through her He wounded me and placed thir’through her healed me." This will, I hope, be a sufficient account of "this age, 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. Forst's standards?

She is not the sort of the author of Ashenden and First Person Singular has always, properly, portrayed character by showing us what people do and wish. This method is wholly successful where the objects of a writer's first match his talent and the cast of his mind. It has a further advantage in that one can accurately report conduct without underwriting its motives. In later years Mr. Maugham has become less interested in other aspects of character and experience, the mystic, visionary, and most optimistic investors to delay their purchases, while at the same time the great majority are unwilling to cut out of the market for its values appear uneasy. To vulgarise Mr. Comfort's terms: "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 42 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 the warehouse 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 41/2 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 business, 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 £100,000 of Ordinary capital.
FREDERICK MULLER

MAN AGAINST MYTH
Professor Barrows Dunham Professor Einstein says of his work, "It is the intellectual assumption of our age, *" an instruction against the fallacy of which success is most desirable to the public interest."

THOMAS CHATTERTON
Professor John Carnall Nevill A brief account of the life of Thomas Chatterton, the English poet, and his adventure in the wilds of the "Glamorgan Valley."

ITALY and ITALIANS
Count Carlo Sforza An important work by the late Count Carlo Sforza, who has been described as "the most important Italian writer of our time." In this book, he offers a unique insight into the political, social, and cultural history of Italy, focusing on the lives of prominent figures from its past and present.

MAN AND PLAN IN SOVIET ECONOMY
An analysis of Soviet planning by the late Professor John Haynes, head of the Department of Soviet Studies at the University of Chicago. In this book, he offers a detailed examination of the economic and social policies of the Soviet Union, including the role of the state in the economy and the impact of Soviet social and cultural institutions on the lives of its citizens.

THE PILGRIM'S WAY
A Pilgrimage Through the South of France by P. L. B. Smith, illustrated by the famous artist, John Singer Sargent. In this book, the author takes the reader on a journey through the beautiful landscapes and historic sites of southern France, offering insights into the culture and history of the region.

ITALIAN LITERATURE
Your Guide to the Best of Italian Literature, including works by Dante, Petrarca, and others. This book offers a comprehensive overview of the rich and diverse tradition of Italian literature, from its medieval roots to the contemporary era.

MAN AND PLAN IN SOVIET ECONOMY
An analysis of Soviet planning by the late Professor John Haynes, head of the Department of Soviet Studies at the University of Chicago. In this book, he offers a detailed examination of the economic and social policies of the Soviet Union, including the role of the state in the economy and the impact of Soviet social and cultural institutions on the lives of its citizens.

THE PILGRIM'S WAY
A Pilgrimage Through the South of France by P. L. B. Smith, illustrated by the famous artist, John Singer Sargent. In this book, the author takes the reader on a journey through the beautiful landscapes and historic sites of southern France, offering insights into the culture and history of the region.

ITALIAN LITERATURE
Your Guide to the Best of Italian Literature, including works by Dante, Petrarca, and others. This book offers a comprehensive overview of the rich and diverse tradition of Italian literature, from its medieval roots to the contemporary era.

MAN AND PLAN IN SOVIET ECONOMY
An analysis of Soviet planning by the late Professor John Haynes, head of the Department of Soviet Studies at the University of Chicago. In this book, he offers a detailed examination of the economic and social policies of the Soviet Union, including the role of the state in the economy and the impact of Soviet social and cultural institutions on the lives of its citizens.

THE PILGRIM'S WAY
A Pilgrimage Through the South of France by P. L. B. Smith, illustrated by the famous artist, John Singer Sargent. In this book, the author takes the reader on a journey through the beautiful landscapes and historic sites of southern France, offering insights into the culture and history of the region.

ITALIAN LITERATURE
Your Guide to the Best of Italian Literature, including works by Dante, Petrarca, and others. This book offers a comprehensive overview of the rich and diverse tradition of Italian literature, from its medieval roots to the contemporary era.

MAN AND PLAN IN SOVIET ECONOMY
An analysis of Soviet planning by the late Professor John Haynes, head of the Department of Soviet Studies at the University of Chicago. In this book, he offers a detailed examination of the economic and social policies of the Soviet Union, including the role of the state in the economy and the impact of Soviet social and cultural institutions on the lives of its citizens.
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 invalidated out with rheumatism and ten clothing coupons in 1944. She has already described her experiences in the Cinderella of the Services. Tail Coat (Chapman and Hall, 10/6) tells of a life gallantly restarted with the rheumatism, the clothing coupons, and the seeing eye, deaf 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, which made her proper to the canto philosophico-un sophisticate East Anglia of her war-work. Anything characteristic, from men and women to buildings and birds, from gnarled and lichenened apple-trees to gnarled and lichenened 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 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 maternity 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 our celebrated Mr. Punch, who has made her proper to the canto philosophico-un sophisticate East Anglia of her war-work. Anything characteristic, from men and women to buildings and birds, from gnarled and lichenened apple-trees to gnarled and lichenened 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.

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 church-going 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.
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 curled up in a Capt!', 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 which is hardly to be expected in the young. The novelist should turn in the sea.

Mr. Maugham's career, one hopes, is nowhere near its end, and Catalina belongs, in fact, to a group of post-1939 Maugham 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 from peril to idyll. The clouds of smoke from incense and burning heretics clear away, and the average Maugham novel reminds one of a bag of sweets whose base is liquorice; it is impossible not to finish it at a sitting, and impossible not to feel, in the end, disappointed and sawdust. Catalina surges 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 characteristically (but is so suited to his novel) massacre of his clarity that a semicolon, he believes, is impossible to give significance to a lifework to it, in Miss Boyle, a disinterested, his limited ideal of art, and a literary history. After Hemingway's death, a praiseworthy recommendation, but one which, too often, leaves it permanently on edge.

The reality, pattern in art has the art of commanding a universal recognition; the novelist, in writing departs from reality, the style it should be replaced by equal effort in the spirit of the enterprise. Miss Boyle believes that the departure pays for itself by the disquieting impression of centres of vertigo in His vague 'being a genius together', to give significance to a lifework to its, in Miss Boyle, a disinterested, his limited ideal of art, and a literary history. After Hemingway's death, a praiseworthy recommendation, but one which, too often, leaves it permanently on edge.

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 aesthetically in art for style's sake, is likely to mistake a personal foible for a character. Mr. Maugham's novel since has best surprised with a reappearance
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 Platedesque 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, cliche-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, Thorton 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 Houl.t

CATALINA. W. Somerset Maugham. (Heinemann, 6s. 6d. net.)
A CANDLE FOR ST. JUDE. Rumer Godden. (Michael Joseph, 8s. 6d. net.)
THE LAND WITHIN. Ignatie Legrand. (Phoenix Press, 9s. 6d. net.)
IN WELOCK WAKE. Marion Sturges-Jones. (Heinemann, 6s. 6d. net.)
THE LAST FRONTIER. Howard Fast. (The Bodley Head, 9s. 6d. net.)
MASTER MARINER. Leo Walmesley. (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, worlds. 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 diseased 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 apostate 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 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 convulses 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 gallows! But after the miraculous cure is accomplished, as it uneasy about such prolonged intercourse with what must remain to him the ordinary 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 Process of a convert who has hoped for worldly reasons, and to spite the wishes 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 lighthearted 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 desecrated themselves of emotion, so careful are they to keep their foreheads rather than our hearts. Miss Rumer Godden is a most welcome exception to this rule. She is not ashamed to keep deep 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 balle'tomane. 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. All ends badly and sadly with the doctor's suicide. Also conventional but in the more modern manner is the American In Weelson Wake. Howard Fast tells once again, and tells very well, one of those stirring 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...