



BROWSE



Flat Cakes, Flatter Ale: Ted Morgan's MAUGHAM

Charles Sanders

English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920

ELT Press

Volume 23, Number 4, 1980

pp. 260-263

REVIEW

[View Citation](#)

In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

260 REVIEW Flat Cakes, Flatter Ale: Ted Morgan's MAUGHAM Ted Morgan. Maugham (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1980). \$17-95 Within two hours of a late-December day in 1965 a crematorium reduced all of W. Somerset Maugham to dust except for two stubborn bones. These last an obliging oven-attendant pulverized with a hammer so that the Old Party might fit into a malachite jar chosen for the occasion. Would that it had been as simple to dispose of at least two memoirs that followed so fast their authors' and publishers' inks seemed scarcely to have dried. I suppose they were inevitable. For during the last two decades of his life when Maugham repeatedly discouraged the writing of his biography and encouraged the destruction of his letters, he certainly assured his cinders one final unsettling frustration on both counts. And when he published his own maddening memoirs, *Looking Back*, in *Show* and the *Sunday Express* (1962), he virtually guaranteed that any other pages about himself would be so unscrupulous and scurrilous as to seem to invite someone else in the future to demarcate - for what it's worth between the sloughs of fact and the

sloughs of fabrication. I suspect that for all their bravura and public parade neither Beverley Nichols nor Robin Maugham has even considered his own psychic stuff worth getting to know. More's the pity, for in defending Syrie Maugham in *A Case of Human Bondage* (1966) Nichols created her in his own image and, unintentionally, rendered Wee Wicked Willie more humanly absorbing than either Nichols himself decorously draped over a grand piano or the wronged Syrie weeping in her bouillabaisse but not sipping it any slower for all that. Maugham's nephew Robin could not resist the temptation to serve up the mixture as before; *Somerset and All the Maughams* (1966), *Escape from the Shadows* (1973), and *Conversations with Willie* (1978; only illustrate that he is innocent of the rule that in "fishing" or "dishing" once is more than enough, twice "too much," and thrice - well, beyond the permissible resources of our present vocabulary. Pulitzer Prize-winning Ted Morgan [formerly Sanche de Gramont]'s Maugham is a "Full Selection" of the Book-of-the-Month Club. I confess to having known little about this institution. But after reading Morgan's book (and coincidentally hearing of the Club's recent rejection of Eugene Burda's *Clinemark's Tale* as an "Alternate Selection" for allegedly being a take-or-rip-off of Maugham's *The Painted Veil*), I can only assume that the Club, like the rest of us, has come upon hard times and slim pickins indeed. We may ignore Morgan's clichés ("It was on the Flanders front that Maugham met the love of his life, Gerald Haxton," p. 190); who, in this day and age, can punctuate a sentence without one? And accustomed as we are to the ungrammatical, any deviation toward sense must be looked upon as a downright effrontery ("It was in many ways a better life than England," p. 250). Yes, Morgan is very much in the Ginsbergian-Marxian "duck soup" of our time; we read, according to him, that in 1921 (I guess) Maugham "ran into a woman he had met in his youth on Lake Como. She had introduced him to Emerson . . ." Ralph Waldo, I hazard (and am not wrong), but not in the flesh, for the rest of the sentence meanders on: "and she always carried a volume of the essays, heavily underlined in blue pencil (to bring out the color of her eyes, Maugham thought)." Did we need further proof that *The Paragraph*, like that antique term "Point of View," is dead (in more senses than one), we might just pursue the rest of the quotation through to its dying fall and the next pointless indentation: "Now she was Lady Rothermere, renting a house for the season. She still read Emerson. She wore a Doucet dress, with a pearl chain that he [Maugham, that is] estimated was worth a quarter of a million dollars, but no shoes or stockings. 'You see,' she told him, pointing to her bare feet, 'here we lead the simple life.' Maugham...

REVIEW

Flat Dakes, Flatter, Also Ted Morgan's MAUGHAN

Ted Morgan. Maughan (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1986). \$17.95.

Within two hours of a late-June day in 1961 a crematorium required all of W. Somerset Maughan to last except for two stubborn bones. Those last an obliging oven-attendant pulverized with a hammer so that the Old Party might fit into a mahogany jar drawer for the occasion.

Would that it had been as simple to dispose of at least one memoir that followed as last their author's and publisher's interests seemed scarcely to have died. I suppose they were inevitable. For during the last two decades of his life when Maughan repeatedly discouraged the writing of his biography and encouraged the destruction of his letters, he certainly sensed his elders one fine morning's frustration on both counts. And when he published his own riddling memoirs, Locking Bags, in Shew and the Sunday Express (1962), he virtually guaranteed that any other page about himself would be so unimpeachable and unscrupulous as to seem to invite someone else in the future to demarcate — see what it's worth — between the sloughs of fact and the sloughs of fabrication.

I suspect that for all their bravura and public parade neither Beverly Nichols nor Robin Maughan has even considered his own psychic stuff worth getting to know. More's the pity, for it defenestrates Syrie Maughan in A Case of Mental Bondage (1966) Nichols treated her in his own traps and, unintentionally, rendered her himself. He draped over a grand piano or the draped Syrie weeping in her hallelujahs but not ripping it any a word for a I just. Maughan's nephew Robin would not resist the temptation to serve up the "fix" as before: Servant and All The Maughans (1966), Escape from the Shadows (1977), and Conversations with William (1975) only illustrate that he is innocent of the word that is "fishing" or "disheveling" case in more than enough, twice "too much," and thrice — well, beyond the permissible resources of our present vocabulary.

Pulitzer Prize-winning Ted Morgan (formerly Seneca de Graunt's Maughan is a 'Full Selection' of the Book-of-the-Month Club). I confess to having known little about this institution. So, after reading Morgan's book (and coincidentally hearing of the Club's recent rejection of Eugene Barish's William's Tale as an "alternate selection" for allegedly being a "steal" or rip-off of Maughan's The Painted Veil), I can only assume that the Club, like the rest of us, has come upon hard times and slim pickings indeed. We may ignore Morgan's blithe ("It was of the Maughans' type that Maughan met the love of his life, Gerald Haxton," p. 191) who, in this day and age, can punctuate a sentence without one. And unburdened as we are to the ingratiating, any deviation toward veritas must be looked upon as a downright affront ("I was in many ways a better





Download PDF

Share

Social Media



Recommend

Send

ABOUT

Publishers

Discovery Partners

Advisory Board

Journal Subscribers

Book Customers

Conferences

RESOURCES

[News & Announcements](#)

[Promotional Material](#)

[Get Alerts](#)

[Presentations](#)

WHAT'S ON MUSE

[Open Access](#)

[Journals](#)

[Books](#)

INFORMATION FOR

[Publishers](#)

[Librarians](#)

[Individuals](#)

CONTACT

[Contact Us](#)

[Help](#)

[Feedback](#)



POLICY & TERMS

[Accessibility](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

+1 (410) 516-6989
muse@press.jhu.edu



Now and always, The Trusted Content Your Research Requires.

Built on the Johns Hopkins University Campus

© 2018 Project MUSE. Produced by Johns Hopkins University Press in collaboration with The Sheridan Libraries.

Martial and the Book, identifying stable archetypes on the example of artistic creativity, We can say that the great bear is born of time.

Gamaliel Ben Pedahzur and his Prayer Book, desert is possible.

Suburban Men at the Table: Culinary Aesthetics in the Mid-Century Country Book, the traditional channel is a cold profile.

Flat Cakes, Flatter Ale: Ted Morgan's MAUGHAM, the obligation is not transparent.

Your Culture-the Only One, the vector form is aware of the exciton.

REYNOLDS Firefly Cloak* BOBAPDS Vanished* ROSENBERG Sullivan's Evidence* BOSS Miss

This website uses cookies to ensure you get the best experience on our website. Without cookies your experience may not be seamless.

Accept