



**Le Mans
Université,
France**

**13 and 14
March 2025**

How Good Maugham Was: A Critical Reassessment

Programme & Abstracts

*An International Conference organised by X. Lachazette
(Le Mans Université), J. Chemmachery (Sorbonne
Université), and N. Cloarec (Université de Rennes)*



Faculté des Lettres,
Langues & Sciences
Humaines
Le Mans Université



3L.AM
Langues, Littératures,
Linguistique
Le Mans Université
Université d'Angers



**Le Mans
Université**

Programme



Thursday 13 March

9:00 Registration & Refreshments

9:30 Welcome Address & General Information

10:00 Panel #1: Maugham and Colonial Issues

10:00 - 10:20

Shashank B. MANE (Jaysingpur College): Colonial Perspectives: Analysing Moral Decline, Power Dynamics, and Cultural Displacement in Maugham's Selected Short Stories

10:20 - 10:40

Wen-Shan SHIEH (Shih Chien University): The View from a Hotel: Lying and Moral Choice in Somerset Maugham's Crime Stories set in Singapore and Other Parts of British Malaya

10:40 - 11:00 DISCUSSION

11:00 - 11:20

Paola Irene GALLI MASTRODONATO (Tuscia University): How Terrifying Are Malaysian Vendettas? Emilio Salgari Confronts Somerset Maugham

11:20 - 11:40

Ning XING (Ritsumeikan University): The Nowhere Past: Disillusion of "Retrotopia" in Maugham's South Seas Short Stories

11:40 - 12:00 DISCUSSION

Lunch

13:30 Panel #2: Maugham and Europe

13:30 - 13:50

Emilie GEORGES (Université Paris Nanterre) [online]: Maugham: A Francophone Writer?

13:50 - 14:10

Fernando APOLINAR-RODRIGUEZ (Universidade de Santiago de Compostela): 'Flamboyant Realism': Somerset Maugham and Spanish Golden-Century Art

14:10 - 14:30

Fernando COPELLO (Le Mans Université): Don Guillermo Somerset Maugham et son amour de l'Espagne classique : à propos de la mise en scène de *Don Fernando* (1935, révisé en 1950)

14:30 - 14:50 DISCUSSION

14:50-15:10 Refreshments

15:10 Panel #3: Maugham's Popularity in Asia

15:10-15:30

Akira KAIHO (Japan Maugham Society): Acceptance of W. Somerset Maugham in Japan: Then and Now

15:30 - 15:50

Makiko OTOGURO (Nihon University): Reception of W. Somerset Maugham in Japan: Buddhism as an Intercultural Conversation

15:50 - 16:10

Xavier LACHAZETTE (Le Mans Université): From Spy to Symbol: Maugham in Tan Twan Eng's *The House of Doors* (2023)

16:10 - 16:30 DISCUSSION

16:30 General Information (about dinner and tomorrow)

19:00 Conference Dinner

Friday 14 March

09:00-15:30 Keynote Speech

Tim YOUNGS (Nottingham Trent University): 'Richness of Personality': Maugham's Travel Writing

10:00-10:20 Refreshments

10:20 Panel #4: Literary Perspectives on Maugham

10:20-10:40

Elodie RAIMBAULT (Université Grenoble Alpes): Neutrality and Detachment: Spatiality in Somerset Maugham's Spy Stories (*Ashenden*, 1928)

10:40 - 11:00

Prabhanjan MANE (Shivaji University, Kolhapur): The Theme of Morality as a Constraint and Existential Self-Realization in W. Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*

11:00 - 11:20 DISCUSSION

11:20-11:40

Areti DOUKA (University of Angers / University of Athens) [online]: The East in Short Cuts: A Comparative Study through Forms

11:40 - 12:00

Eva ESCANDON (Toronto Metropolitan University) [online]: Who Controls the Story? Gender Bias and Biographical Ethics in *Cakes and Ale*

12:00 - 12:20 DISCUSSION

12:20-12:40 Concluding and Prospective Remarks

12:40-13:30 Lunch

Abstracts

arranged alphabetically by speakers' last names



Maugham by Edouard MacAvoy

Fernando APOLINAR-RODRIGUEZ

Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, Spain

‘Flamboyant Realism’: Somerset Maugham and Spanish Golden-Century Art

The lifelong love affair between William Somerset Maugham and the visual arts is not only self-evident in the author’s literary career (Paul Gauguin in *The Moon and the Sixpence*) but also in his personal life as an art collector and connoisseur, as seen in his short essay *Purely For My Pleasure* (1962). His passion for art was not only circumscribed by *avant-garde* artists, such as Paul Gauguin and Paul Cézanne; but he was also keen on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Old Masters, especially those of the Spanish Golden Century. This specific time period attracted Somerset Maugham’s attention, influencing many of his works, including not only his fiction (e.g. *Creatures of Circumstance* (1947) and *Catalina* (1948)) but also his non-fiction (e.g. *The Land of the Blessed Virgin* (1905) and *Don Fernando* (1935)).

This paper will examine the interplay between Somerset Maugham’s non-fiction and Spanish Golden Century art. Somerset Maugham’s theory of ‘Baroque’ will first be explored, as stated in *Don Fernando*, based on the principles of ‘ornamentation’ and ‘theatricality’. This theory will serve as a basis for the analysis of the travelogue *The Land of the Blessed Virgin* (1905) since the visual arts play here a central role here, most notably in Maugham’s attempt to encapsulate an ‘essential’ Spanish identity through the paintings of Bartolomé Esteban Murillo. The analysis will progress chronologically, detailing how Spanish art is presented in later non-fiction works, such as Maugham’s *ethopoeia* of Zurbarán in *The Vagrant Mood* (1922) and that of El Greco in *Don Fernando* (1935).

In doing so, Somerset Maugham’s relatively underexamined non-fiction books will be explored here through a new lens, thus providing relevant information on the role of Baroque visual arts in the author’s critical thought and aesthetics. Furthermore, this paper will explore the extent to which paintings of the ‘*Siglo de Oro*’ influenced Maugham’s devotion to Spain and how his opinions on these paintings and artists evolved from admiration in his early works to the rejection of Baroque ideals in his later essays.

Biographical Information

Fernando Apolinar-Rodríguez is a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Philology, University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain. He received his master’s degree in Advanced English Studies from the same university, with a Master’s dissertation delving into Maugham’s travelogue on Spain, *The Land of the Blessed Virgin*. He has participated in several conferences across Galicia, and has contributed translations of Maugham’s short stories in different journals. His research interests range from the development of utopian and dystopian fiction to the study of Victorian and Edwardian travel writing.

Fernando COPELLO

Le Mans University, France

Talk in French, with English slides (see English translation below)

Don Guillermo Somerset Maugham et son amour de l’Espagne classique : à propos de la mise en scène de *Don Fernando* (1935, révisé en 1950)

L’ailleurs a toujours inspiré les récits de l’écrivain anglais William Somerset Maugham, qui a vécu une bonne partie de sa vie à l’étranger. Sa littérature est plutôt associée au monde oriental, mais l’Espagne a aussi une place considérable dans son œuvre. Par ailleurs son livre de mémoires, *The Summing Up* (1938), se termine par une évocation de Fray Luis de León, le grand poète de l’Espagne de la Renaissance. Encore plus importante est la présence de l’Espagne, pays où Maugham a vécu, et de la littérature hispanique dans son *A Writer’s Notebook* (1949). La réflexion sur la culture espagnole, en particulier classique (cette période que l’on appelle le *Siècle d’Or*), est également présente dans *The Land of the Blessed Virgin : Sketches and Impressions in Andalusia* (1905) et *Don Fernando* (1935, révisé en 1950). Cette passion de l’Espagne trouvera finalement une voie vraiment narrative dans le roman *Catalina* (1948), nourri par des recherches et une certaine expérimentation présentes dans les textes qui précèdent.

Don Fernando, considéré par certains critiques comme un livre de voyage, est surtout un essai sur l'art et la littérature de l'Espagne classique. Mais Maugham ne renonce pas à lui accorder une atmosphère narrative cherchant à dissoudre sa propre culture savante dans un esprit plutôt populaire ou accessible à un public relativement large. L'analyse de la note introductive à l'édition révisée de 1950 ainsi que l'étude de l'ouverture de l'œuvre constitueront des éléments d'analyse révélateurs de la passion espagnole de Maugham.

Don Guillermo Somerset Maugham and His Love for Classical Spain: On the Staging of *Don Fernando* (1935, revised in 1950)

Distant places have always inspired the writings of the English author William Somerset Maugham, who spent a significant part of his life abroad. His literature is generally associated with the Eastern world, but Spain also holds a considerable place in his work. Moreover, his memoir, *The Summing Up* (1938), ends with an evocation of Fray Luis de León, the great poet of Renaissance Spain. Even more significant is the presence of Spain—a country where Maugham lived—and Hispanic literature in *A Writer's Notebook* (1949). Reflections on Spanish culture, particularly the classical period (known as the Golden Age), are also present in *The Land of the Blessed Virgin: Sketches and Impressions in Andalusia* (1905) and *Don Fernando* (1935, revised in 1950). This passion for Spain ultimately found a truly narrative form in the novel *Catalina* (1948), which was enriched by research and a certain experimentation evident in his preceding works.

Don Fernando, considered by some critics to be a travel book, is above all an essay on the art and literature of classical Spain. However, Maugham does not hesitate to imbue it with a narrative atmosphere, seeking to dissolve his own erudition into a more popular style, making it accessible to a relatively broad audience. The analysis of the introductory note in the revised 1950 edition, as well as the study of the work's opening, will provide key insights into Maugham's passion for Spain.

Biographical Information

Fernando Copello is an Emeritus Professor of Spanish Golden Age literature at Le Mans University. He is a member of the Labo 3L.AM and CRES/LECIMO. He has primarily studied 17th-century Spanish short stories and novels. Among his works are the annotated edition of Sebastián Mey's *Fabulario* (1613) published by PUR (2017) and studies on Miguel de Cervantes, Lope de Vega, María de Zayas, among others. He has also explored Sephardic literature and the theme of gardens in Hispanic worlds.

Areti DOUKA

University of Angers, France/National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece

The East in Short Cuts: A Comparative Study through Forms

W. Somerset Maugham's "Tales of the East" captivate the reader from the first reading. Maugham's writing allows us to penetrate a world that is complex, enchanting but also dark. Nikos Kazantzakis, through his travel articles – later published as a book – tries to strike a balance between fiction and travel writing. He presents the East (China, Japan) through the idiosyncratic lens of the journalist/writer.

Based on the common locus of the two authors' stories, which is the East, this study discusses the way the two authors handle the concept of form, as formulated by Caroline Levine (2017). More specifically, in Maugham's short story *Mr Know-All* and Kazantzakis' travel story *Singapore*, this paper addresses how the authors deal with the following forms: the whole – through the characteristics of the short story; rhythm – through the narrative techniques and motifs they use; hierarchy – the role of the narrator and characters; and the network – the way the above interweave with each other, with the aim of finding points of convergence between the two.

Biographical Information

Areti Dimitra Douka is a teacher and has been working for the last 15 years at the Greek French School "Eugene Delacroix". She is a graduate of the Athens School of Philosophy and specifically of the Department of "Philosophy – Pedagogy – Psychology" and holds the postgraduate degrees "Planning and Evaluation of Educational Units" from the University of the Aegean and "Humanistic Studies: Literature, Theatre and Language in Education" from the Department of Primary Education of the

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She is currently working on her doctoral thesis on the short form in Literature at the University of Angers in co-supervision with the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She has collaborated with the Institute for Lifelong Learning in the framework of the “Parents’ Schools” project. Her work has been presented at conferences and her articles have been published in scientific journals and books.

Eva ESCANDON

Toronto Metropolitan University, Canada

Who Controls the Story? Gender Bias and Biographical Ethics in *Cakes and Ale*

Through the investigation into *Cakes and Ale*, it is evident that the text seeks to expose gender biases through the juxtaposition of the portrayal of the essential author and the inessential wife of the author. I seek to explore the role of the female characters, Mrs. Barton Trafford, Rosie Driffield/Iggulden and Amy Driffield, in discussing ethical representations in biography. The personalized and detailed approach of the female characters (wives of authors) demonstrates how they ‘control’ the story as opposed to the writers who are supposed to ‘create’ the story.

To begin, I propose investigating Somerset Maugham’s life and unhappy marriage to Syrie Maugham. I will consult the texts “Somerset Maugham: Biographer Exposes the Unhappy Man Behind the Rigid Mask,” “*The Secret Lives of Somerset Maugham: A Biography*,” “*Somerset Maugham: A Life*,” and “William Somerset Maugham: introduction” to explore Maugham’s life.

The questions that my presentation seeks to rectify are: How do the female characters in the novel expose gender bias? Why are these women presented as being inessential to Edward Driffield’s creative life? Why does *Cakes and Ale* present these women from a non-stereotypical lens? How do gender biases impact the ethical nature of biographical writings?

I propose to analyze these three female characters through a feminist lens, present their characters as artists of curation and talent, and relate them to Maugham’s biographical biases. Similarly, I argue that this novel acts as a societal commentary for Maugham to expose the literary establishment. Maugham, I argue, uses this novel to argue that authentic work based on truth is the most artfully appreciated and valuable, thus exposing a secondary purpose of this presentation, which is to discuss the ethics of biography.

I plan to expand on the ethics of biography by looking at the textual representation of the wives of authors in *Cakes and Ale*. I will use Jerome G. Manis’ text “What Should Biographers Tell?: The Ethics of Telling Lives” to discuss the ethical considerations of biography writing. I seek to rectify the gendered context of this novel, expose the unique and unexpected power given to the female characters of *Cakes*, and discuss how bias impacts the ethics of biographical writing.

Biographical Information

Eva Escandon has a Master of Arts degree from Toronto Metropolitan University. She has completed with distinction an undergraduate double major in English and History with a minor in Philosophy at Toronto Metropolitan University. Her research interests include the Romantic period and Romantic literature, literary theories, philosophy, film studies, and 19th-century literature. She explores these fields using feminist and ecological lenses.

Paola Irene GALLI MASTRODONATO

Tuscia University, Italy

How Terrifying Are Malaysian Vendettas? Emilio Salgari Confronts Somerset Maugham

Two white authors writing during the heyday of imperialism and colonialism, inscribing Malaysia – and Malaysians – on the literary map. One – Emilio Salgari – has created the most celebrated and famous Southeast Asian hero, Sandokan aka the Tiger of Malaysia; the other – Somerset Maugham – has keenly observed and masterfully interpreted the encounter and erasure of the different within British consciousness in its overseas dominions.

I shall analyze two short stories, *Una vendetta malese* (*A Malaysian Vendetta*, 1909), and “P. & O.” included in the collection *The Casuarina Tree* (1926), that strikingly contain a similar “native” element of contradiction facing the Western protagonists and their innermost beliefs and epistemic constructs: a Malay woman. The “fat” concubine that was left behind in Selatan (southern Sulawesi) and the “pretty Dayak girl” in Balambangan Island (off the northern coast of Borneo) respectively haunt and finally destroy the white colonial world of two planters, the Irish Gallagher and the Genoese Parodi.

Biographical Information

Paola Irene Galli Mastrodonato, PhD in Comparative Literature, McGill University, is a retired faculty member of Tuscia University, Viterbo, Italy. She is the author, translator, editor and co-editor of fourteen books and around sixty scholarly essays, ranging from eighteenth-century studies, the novel of the Revolutionary period, Canadian drama, postcolonial criticism, popular literature, feminist biography. Her latest book is the first full-length study in English on Emilio Salgari: Paola Irene Galli Mastrodonato, *Emilio Salgari: The Tiger Is Still Alive!*, Lanham, MD: Farleigh Dickinson University Press / Rowman & Littlefield, 2024, 431 pp.

Emilie GEORGES

Université Paris Nanterre, France

Maugham: A Francophone Writer?

It is a well-known fact that William Somerset Maugham spoke French from an early age. Ted Morgan notes that, as a child, ‘he spoke English much less well than French’ (*Somerset Maugham*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1980, p. 6), while Anthony Curtis writes that the young Maugham spoke ‘his own native language’, English, ‘a good deal less fluently than he did French’ (*Somerset Maugham*, New York: Macmillan, 1977, p. 22). And yet, Maugham chose to write his literary works in English, despite living abroad, and in France especially, for most of his life. In spite of that, when reading certain passages closely, it is possible to detect the influence of the French language on his craft. Sometimes, that is very obvious, as in *The Razor’s Edge* where the narrator has a conversation, apparently originally in colloquial French, with a French character, Suzanne, which Maugham is at pains to translate into English: he offers “Tell that to the marines, old girl.” for “À d’autres, ma vieille” but cannot find any English equivalent for “Et ta soeur” and resigns himself to stating that it is ‘untranslatable’ (London: Vintage, 2000, p. 334-337). At other times, it is hidden in the English sentences, as in the short story ‘Rain’ where Maugham chooses the turn of phrase ‘to cheat her loneliness’ (*Collected Short Stories*, Vol. 1, London: Vintage, 2000, p. 28), which corresponds to the very common French idiom *tromper sa solitude*. In this paper I propose to study how Maugham uses his knowledge of French to fashion a style of writing that is not just the speech of a cosmopolitan persona but also reflects an inherent and ineradicable sense of displacement. Just as Maugham’s narrator is almost always a traveller in transit between places, making notes of his encounters with multiple, diverse people, his very speech is based in the in-betweenness of the author’s own linguistic situation. This understanding of linguistic complexity ultimately shapes Somerset Maugham’s understanding of the complexity of the human psyche in which transitoriness and the coexistence of multiple dimensions are the rule rather than the exception and fixity is usually a mere impression.

Biographical Information

Emilie Georges is an alumna of the Ecole Normale Supérieure de Lyon and a *professeur agrégé* of English language and literature. She has recently finished her PhD thesis, entitled ‘Ezra Pound’s Italy and Italian: the aestheticisation of politics through the prism of language’, under the supervision of Prof. Hélène Aji at Université Paris Nanterre. Her main areas of interest are poetic multilingualism and the links between politics and aesthetics in early-twentieth-century English-language literature. She has written several articles about the prose and poetry of Ezra Pound, including ‘Ezra Pound’s Representations of Sexual Intercourse and the Female Genitalia in The Cantos’, which was published in *Miranda* in the autumn of 2020.

Akira KAIHO
Japan Maugham Society

Acceptance of W. Somerset Maugham in Japan: Then and Now

The reception of W. Somerset Maugham in Japan can be divided into two phases: the first in the 1950s, peaking with Maugham's visit in 1959, and the second, a revival beginning in the 21st century, particularly after 2010. During the first phase, Maugham's complete works were published, and his writings frequently appeared in university entrance exams and liberal arts English texts. This boom was driven by several factors, including the post-war reaction against the absence of foreign literature, Maugham's engaging writing style, his exploration of life's meaning, and the introduction by University of Tokyo professor Yoshio Nakano. Maugham's visit to Japan drew large crowds, but the boom rapidly declined after his return, and by the end of the 20th century, his works had disappeared from paperback editions.

The revival began in the 21st century, especially after 2010, with new translations of major novels such as *Of Human Bondage*. The emergence of new translations, rather than reprints, indicates a resurgence of Maugham's popularity and reflects the rapid evolution of Japanese prose.

A notable feature of the second phase is the continuous staging of Maugham's plays. During the first phase, Maugham was recognized primarily as a novelist in Japan, with little attention paid to his plays, most of which were comedies. However, since the 2010s, the farce *Too Many Husbands* has sparked interest due to changes in societal awareness and gender theory in Japan. Additionally, serious later plays, such as *For Services Rendered* and *The Sacred Flame*, performed in 2023, suggest future prospects. The activities of the Japan Maugham Society, introduced in the speech, symbolize the contemporary reception of Maugham in Japan.

Biographical Information

Akira Kaiho graduated from the University of Tokyo, Faculty of Letters, Department of Western History in 1977. After serving as a branch manager in Europe for Sanwa Bank and later as the president of a trading company, he currently continues his work as an auditor while also engaging in writing activities as the Vice President of the Japan Maugham Society. He has published the following works: *Europe through the Eyes of a Banker* (Tokyo: Chuo Koron Business Publishing, 2010); *Retail Banking: A Tale of Then and Now* (Tokyo: Kinyu Zaisei Jijo Kenkyukai, 2012); and *Enjoying Somerset Maugham* (Tokyo: Otowa Shobo, Tsurumi Shoten, 2023).

Xavier LACHAZETTE
Le Mans University, France

From Spy to Symbol: Maugham in Tan Twan Eng's *The House of Doors* (2023)

In Tan Twan Eng's *The House of Doors* (2013), the protagonist, Lesley Hamlyn, recalls a pivotal episode from her life in 1921, when she and her husband hosted Somerset Maugham and his companion, Gerald, in Penang, then part of the Federated Malay States. Initially, she fears Maugham due to his past involvement in WWI espionage and his reputation for prying into others' lives. She also harbors disdain for him because of his sexuality.

As the novel unfolds, the reader comes to realize that Maugham had already, albeit unknowingly, been connected to Lesley's life. This revelation stems from an earlier encounter in 1911, also in Penang, when she met revolutionary Sun Yat-sen before he became the first provisional president of the Republic of China. During that episode, Maugham's iconic Moorish symbol, featured on the cover of many of his books, became a symbol of Lesley's liberation from an unhappy marriage.

By the novel's conclusion, neither Maugham's profession nor his sexuality remains a source of discomfort for Lesley. Much like the realization of her namesake in Maugham's short story "P. & O.," she comes to see that the prejudices instilled in her by society, along with feelings of contempt or moral superiority, ultimately pale in comparison to the fundamental truths that unite human beings: their shared desire to live as best they can and the inescapable transience of life.

Maugham thus emerges as a sage-like figure—a man whose gift for listening allows others to find their own liberated voices. Besides, though deeply aware of human weaknesses and contradictions, both in men and women, he chooses tolerance over cynicism, offering understanding rather than rejection.

Biographical Information

Xavier Lachazette is an Associate Professor of nineteenth- and twentieth-century British literature at Le Mans University. He is a member of his university's 3LAM research centre and an associate member of the University of Angers' CIRPaLL, one of whose research axes focuses on short fiction. He has published articles on works by Maugham (*On a Chinese Screen*; *The Casuarina Tree*; "P. & O." and "Masterson"), together with "Stories of Human Character: W. Somerset Maugham" (2016), a general introduction for the Gale Researcher Guide series. In 2021 and 2023, he edited two collections of articles on Daphne du Maurier's short stories, following an international conference held in Le Mans.

Prabhanjan MANE

Shivaji University, Kolhapur, India

The Theme of Morality as a Constraint and Existential Self-realization in W. Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*

W. Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage* (1915) has been analysed by critics from various perspectives. But the theme of morality as a constraint which is central to Philip Carey's development, shaping his internal conflicts and personal struggles seems to be neglected aspect of the novel. So, this paper explores the theme of morality as a constraint in *Of Human Bondage*, examining it through the existential lens of Don Adams and the philosophical framework of Baruch Spinoza. The protagonist, Philip Carey, is shaped by societal moral expectations and internal struggles, which limit his freedom and personal growth. Don Adams' existential interpretation highlights Philip's journey as a reflection of alienation, the rejection of traditional values, and the pursuit of self-authenticity. In this view, Philip's struggle with moral constraints represents an existential crisis, as he attempts to break free from societal norms to find personal meaning. Furthermore, Spinoza's philosophy of freedom and determinism provides an additional framework to analyze Philip's experience. Spinoza argues that true freedom is attained by understanding the constraints of nature and human emotions, a concept mirrored in Philip's eventual rejection of conventional morality in his search for autonomy. This paper argues that Maugham's depiction of morality serves as both a restrictive force and a pathway to self-awareness, aligning with Spinoza's ideas on freedom and Adams' existential analysis. Through this dual lens, the paper demonstrates how Philip's quest for personal freedom is a complex navigation between moral constraints and existential self-realization.

Biographical Information

Dr. Prabhanjan Mane is a professor (and Head) of English at the Department of English of Shivaji University, Kolhapur (Maharashtra), India. He completed his M.A. in 1999 and qualified SET in 2003. He has also successfully completed the PGCTE and PGDTE courses from the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad. He earned his M.Phil. in 2005 with a focus on 'comic elements' in Eugene O'Neill's selected plays, and his Ph.D. in 2011 on the theme of 'law, order, crime and punishment' in selected European fiction. His publications include a book, entitled *Interpreting Drama* (New Delhi: Atlantic, 2010). He has completed research projects on "The Theme of Law, Order, Crime and Punishment in Continental Fiction" [Sanctioned by University Grants Commission (UGC), New Delhi in 2010]; and 'Dialogic Analysis of Film Adaptations of Select Marathi Novels'.

Shashank MANE

Jaysingpur College, Jaysingpur, India

Colonial Perspectives: Analysing Moral Decline, Power Dynamics, and Cultural Displacement in Maugham's Selected Short Stories

Despite the rich potential for critical examination, W. Somerset Maugham's short stories, particularly those set in Southeast Asia, remain underexplored in scholarly discourse. This paper seeks to address this gap by analyzing Maugham's portrayal of colonialism, focusing on the moral decline of European settlers and the broader implications for both colonizers and the colonized. Maugham's stories, such as "The Outstation," "The Yellow Streak," and "The Fall of Edward Bernard," provide a nuanced critique of colonial life, capturing the disillusionment and cultural alienation experienced by European officials like Mr. Davis. Through these narratives, Maugham explores how the colonizers' isolation and failure to grasp the complexities of the societies they dominate lead to moral and psychological decline. Concurrently, the paper examines how Maugham's stories reflect and critique colonial attitudes, policies, and practices, presenting a paradoxical stance that both upholds and challenges dominant colonial ideologies. The analysis highlights the racial tensions and cultural displacement depicted in these stories, revealing the inherent contradictions within the imperialist framework. By applying postcolonial theory, the paper elucidates how Maugham's narratives address power imbalances, exploitation, and resistance, offering a valuable perspective on the impact of colonization. The study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of Maugham's critical engagement with colonialism and the ways in which his stories reflect the complexities of imperialist dynamics, ultimately enriching the discourse on colonial literature and its implications.

Biographical Information

Dr. Shashank B. Mane is a professor of English at Jaysingpur College affiliated to Shivaji University, Maharashtra, India. He completed his M.A. and qualified the NET in 2004. Dr. Mane has also successfully completed the PGCTE and PGDTE courses from the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad. He earned his M.Phil. in 2009 with a focus on literary adaptations and his Ph.D. in 2016 on short stories. With 18 years of teaching experience, he is a recognized research guide at Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune. He has been awarded DAAD and Erasmus Mundus scholarships for his academic achievements.

Makiko OTOGURO

Nihon University, Japan

Reception of Somerset Maugham in Japan: Buddhism as an Intercultural Conversation

Somerset Maugham remains popular in Japan, though Japan is less often depicted in his works compared to other Asian countries. Akio Namekata attributes Maugham's popularity in Japan to the following factors: the compelling nature of his stories, the contribution of excellent translators such as Yoshio Nakano (1903-1985), and the readability of his English, which was once widely used as English textbooks (14-20). Namekata also points out that Maugham's philosophy of life, typically seen in the episode of the Persian rug in *Of Human Bondage* (1915), may have resonated with Japanese readers during the turmoil following WWII.

Based on Namekata's arguments, this paper points out that Maugham's philosophy of life is akin to the Buddhist concept of "impermanence," which is evident by the phrase "he was born, he suffered, and he died" in *Of Human Bondage* (523-24). The theme of "impermanence" is one that Japanese readers, for whom Buddhist culture is deeply rooted, may find relatable, as the idea is often seen in medieval Japanese literature, such as Kamo no Chōmei's *Hōjōki* (1212).

In *The Narrow Corner* (1932), Maugham portrays the theme of Buddhism once again, but in a different way: upon seeing a dying Japanese diver, Dr. Saunders wonders whether he is thinking about "Transmigration" (61), and the subsequent description of the sea serves as a straightforward illustration of "impermanence." Given the social context of the time, it is more reasonable to assume, however, that what this Japanese diver imagined was not so much reincarnation but a more secularized image of "the Pure Land." Maugham's understanding of Buddhism is probably biased toward the concept of what

Lawrence Normand calls “modernist Buddhism” (1), an idea introduced and reinterpreted through the translation of Buddhist manuscripts collected in Asian countries.

In summary, this study will shed light on how Maugham’s works were received by Japanese readers, focusing on the Buddhist influences in his works.

Biographical Information

Makiko Ootoguro is an associate professor at the College of Science and Technology, Nihon University in Japan, where she teaches English to undergraduate students. She is a member of the Japan Maugham Society. She is also interested in the works of R. L. Stevenson and the literary works set in the Pacific islands. Ootoguro has authored several articles, primarily in Japanese, focusing on Maugham’s works written during the inter-war period, including *Of Human Bondage*, *The Trembling of a Leaf* and *The Narrow Corner*.

Elodie RAIMBAULT

Université Grenoble Alpes, France

Neutrality and Detachment:

Spatiality in Somerset Maugham’s Spy Stories (*Ashenden*, 1928)

This paper will consider how Maugham created a typology of neutral spaces in his interwar espionage short stories and will study the aesthetic and ethical consequences of their neutrality.

The figure of the neutral, in the context of conflicts between states, is devalued in patriotic and warlike discourse - the neutral lacks fidelity, courage, and agency - but neutrality is also instrumentalized by secret agents, who strive by erasing their positioning, by neutralizing their identities and origins: just as in the etymology neuter (neither/nor), we know neither who they are, nor where they are speaking from. In early spy stories by Erskine Childers (*The Riddle in the Sands*, 1903), William Le Queux (*The Invasion of 1910*, 1906) and Rudyard Kipling (*Kim*, 1901), intelligence is represented via the motifs of mask and disguise, indicating a blurring of identity: agents infiltrate the enemy population by imitating the Other, tending towards a monopolization of his speech and identity.

Conversely, between the First World War and the 1930s, Somerset Maugham and others, including Graham Greene, developed a new imagery of the intelligence agent. The popular spy stories in *Ashenden* (1928) present disengagement and neutrality as new modes of secrecy. Neutral spaces, such as Switzerland, the hotel or the train carriage, take on particular importance in a context of extreme polarization. Far from the front line, which is marked by direct and explicit confrontation, neutral spaces require agents to work at maintaining the illusion of their absence and erasing their traces. The stories present the neutral as a notion engineered to ‘baffle paradigm’ (Barthes) and to resist binaries. Turning exoticism and the picturesque on their heads, these narratives present characters who also aim to achieve a transparency, anonymity or neutrality that allow their actions to quietly and unobtrusively become part of reality.

Biographical Information

Elodie Raimbault is a senior lecturer in British literature at the Université Grenoble Alpes, and a member of the ILCEA4 / LISCA laboratory. Her recent research explores the representations of space in literature and the connections between text and images, particularly through a study of literary cartography, material imagery and technological analogies. Her 2021 book *Le Géomètre et le vagabond: espaces littéraires de Rudyard Kipling* (UGA Editions) examines the links between literature and geography in Kipling’s work, notably through the question of cartographic representations.

Wen-Shan SHIEH
Shih Chien University, Taiwan

The View from a Hotel: Lying and Moral Choice in Somerset Maugham's: Crime Stories set in Singapore and Other Parts of British Malaya

Somerset Maugham (1874-1965) traveled to British Malaya twice in the 1920s in search of material for his short stories. According to Maugham's biography and notebook, his stay at Raffles Hotel in Singapore and other hotels in British Malaya allowed him to adopt conversations overheard or anecdotes and scandals disclosed by new acquaintances met in the courts, hallways, or restaurants of the hotels in his fiction. While most critics approach Maugham's Malayan short stories from the postcolonial angle which focuses on the rhetoric of debasement used by Maugham to describe the natives, following Orientalist notions and assumptions, I aim to point out that his focus is rather on portraying the social discord and scandals of the British community in Malaya, such as infidelity and crime that are so often accompanied by the act of lying. Drawing on Gayatri Thanu Pillai and Chitra Sankaran's discussion of white women's predicaments in the colony, Emma Short's concept of mobility and the hotel in modern literature, and Sissela Bok's study of the ethics of lying, this paper proposes that the anonymity and mobility of the hotel and travel not only gave Maugham space and freedom to write about the scandals of the expatriate community as an outsider and a traveler, but also served as a trope for his ambivalent and mobile view of lying in his short stories that complicates the problem of whether to lie or not in certain circumstances. By studying three short stories that all involve a murder committed by British residents, namely "Before the Party" (1926), "The Letter" (1926), and "Footprints in the Jungle" (1933), I argue that the focus of Maugham's short stories is not so much on criticizing the moral degeneration that is manifested in lying and murder, as on exploring the ways in which lying is used to defend oneself or avoid harming others, shifting the binary between what is right and wrong.

Biographical Information

Wen-Shan Shieh is Associate Professor in the Department of Applied Foreign Languages at Shih Chien University in Taipei, Taiwan. She received her PhD degree in Critical and Creative Writing from the University of Sussex, UK in 2013. Her research interests include modernism, short fiction, Katherine Mansfield study, Alice Munro study, and medical humanities. Her research has been published in peer-reviewed journals including *Tamkang Review*, *Katherine Mansfield Studies*, among others. Her paper "Restlessness Transformed: Revisiting the Metaphor of Tuberculosis in Katherine Mansfield's Notebooks and Letters" (2023) was shortlisted for the 2022 Katherine Mansfield Society Essay Prize.

Ning XING
Ritsumeikan University, Japan

The Nowhere Past: Disillusion of "Retrotopia" in Maugham's South Seas Short Stories

The Pacific islands had long been depicted as an earthly paradise where Westerners could achieve their dreams. Between 1916 and 1917, temporarily distanced from the shadow of WWI over Europe, W. S. Maugham traveled to the Pacific in search of new creative inspiration. In his South Seas stories based on this journey, he scrutinized the utopian dreams that Western expatriates projected onto these Edenic islands.

Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman introduced the concept of "Retrotopia" (2017) to describe a pathological nostalgic longing to escape back to an idealized past from the fluidity and uncertainty of the contemporary condition. Drawing on Bauman's insights, this paper examines how Maugham's South Seas stories portray characters' longing for the "good old days," spanning from the biblical Eden to pre-modern pastoral life and even to a pre-civilizational, primitive world.

By analyzing the representation of "Retrotopia" in four stories from *The Trembling of a Leaf* (1921) - "Mackintosh," "The Fall of Edward Barnard," "Red," and "The Pool" - this paper argues that Western characters' attempts to realize their "Retrotopia" not only involve appropriating the physical space of Indigenous peoples but also replacing their memory and identity with an idealized Western past. Moreover, many nostalgic dreams in these stories are disrupted by interracial conflicts or ultimately end

in failure, suggesting Maugham's critical observations on the bleak prospects of Western imperial rule in the colonies. Having lived through the Boer War and WWI, Maugham, with his acute sense of the times, captured the gloomy side of the romanticized Pacific colonies. Furthermore, considering that "Utopia" literally means "no place," the pervasive sense of disillusionment in the stories reveals that the Edenic Pacific was more a product of colonial discourse and fantasy than an attainable reality. At the same time, the erosion of the romantic Pacific as a trope also reflects colonial anxieties about the decline of Western imperial colonial rule.

Biographical Information

Xing Ning is a doctoral candidate at the English and American Literature Graduate School of Letters, Ritsumeikan University, Japan. She is a member of The English Literary Society of Japan and the Japan Maugham Society. Her research interests are focused on modern British literature with a trans-cultural background, particularly works related to Asian countries. She has published an article titled "Transgressive "Letters": Reading Maugham's Literary Alteration of a *Cause Célèbre*" and has presented papers at several academic conferences. Currently, she is working on her doctoral dissertation, which examines the novels of W. Somerset Maugham, Anthony Burgess, and contemporary Southeast Asian English writers, investigating their representations of dynamic transracial relationships across different periods.

Keynote Speaker

Tim YOUNGS

Nottingham Trent University, England

‘Richness of Personality’: Maugham’s Travel Writing

In *On a Chinese Screen* Maugham identifies richness of personality as more important to writing than richness of material. My paper contends that in doing so, Maugham is making a false distinction, for personality *is* his material. The notes he makes on people whom he encounters on his travels provide the basis both for passages in his travel books and for some of his short stories, such that he crosses generic boundaries that several other writers – as well as a number of critics – observe. The richness of personality that gives life to Maugham’s travel writing is not only that of the people he meets; it is his own, too. His narration often draws attention to his own distinctive positions – between home and away, between settlers and ‘natives’, between West and East, between his own attitudes and practices and those of his contemporaries. This distinguishing of oneself from others is far from unique in travel writing, but it is in keeping with Maugham’s statements on adding to and changing himself through travel. Maugham’s directing of attention to himself is not solipsistic. Rather, it is one of the means by which he heightens readers’ consciousness of the conventions of travel writing and invites critical consideration of these. In doing so, his travel books share affinities with and stand alongside modernist and other interwar travel books that have received greater critical examination.

Biographical Information

Tim Youngs is Emeritus Professor of English and Travel Studies at Nottingham Trent University. His several books on travel writing include *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (edited with Peter Hulme, 2002), *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing* (2013), *The Cambridge History of Travel Writing*, edited with Nandini Das (2019) and *The Routledge Research Companion to Travel Writing*, edited with Alasdair Pettinger (2019). In 1997 he founded the journal *Studies in Travel Writing* (Taylor & Francis), which he edited until stepping down to an advisory role at the end of 2022. He co-edits with Professor Nandini Das the short-form monograph series *Elements in Travel Writing* for Cambridge University Press and is currently completing *A Very Short Introduction to Travel Writing* for Oxford University Press.



Le Mans, March 2025



13 - 14 MARS 2025

COLLOQUE INTERNATIONAL EN ANGLAIS

How Good Maugham Was: A Critical Reassessment

Quel talent : pour une réévaluation critique de Somerset Maugham

Lieu : Salle bleue R101, Maison des Sciences Humaines -
UFR Lettres, Langues et Sciences Humaines
Le Mans Université

Comité d'organisation :

- Xavier Lachazette, Le Mans Université, France
- Jaine Chemmachery, Sorbonne Université, France
- Nicole Cloarec, Université de Rennes, France



**Le Mans
Université**



Faculté des Lettres,
Langues & Sciences
Humaines
Le Mans Université



3L.A.M.
Langues, Littératures,
Linguistique
Le Mans Université
Université d'Angers

