A Study of The Experimental Women in The Short Fiction of W. Somerset Maugham.

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Abstract- ***W. Somerset Maugham wrote essays on the different types of narration, not only its stylistic features, but also on the characteristics of the writing of the son. And he described the ambiguity about the role of women in the three new novels that appeared in the second quarter of the last year and in the second Guerre Mondial: "Daisy" (1896), "The Creative Impulse" (1926) and "The Colonel's Lady" (1946), about which he wrote a great deal about the oblique and partial successes and deboirs of these protagonists, these novels satisfactorily surmounted by a difficult situation and a fair entry in the voices of femmes in the cultural sphere here they are so many creations, or about the totality of literature, in which he writes objectively about this article, analyzes the construction of personages and the techniques of narratives, which he writes about mises en voir. The text allowed the a priori Victorian authors to express the "new woman", who subverts the principle of control of the masculine narrative and sensibilizes the lecturers and the emergence of women in the public and political spheres. And W. Somerset Maugham wrote extensively about women.***

Index Terms : W. Somerset Maugham, public and political, and characteristics

I. INTRODUCTION

Throughout his long and prolific career, British author W. Somerset Maugham was able to experiment in a variety of genres, beginning as a playwright in the 1890s. He later wrote novels and short stories, as well as cultural criticism. And despite the enormous acclaim and financial success he received during his lifetime, Maugham's legacy has been tarnished by his reputation as a second-rate writer, determined by the inconsistency of critical evaluations of his work, with responses ranging from hostile to supportive, but rarely enthusiastic and rarely openly laudatory. Maugham has been dismissed, at times convincingly, for the simplicity of his plot and the simplicity of his style and dialogue. Maugham was, however, capable of producing prolific works on both a formal and stylistic level. But the short stories analysed in this essay feature narrative voices that refuse to submit to the realm of omniscience, and whatever fabrications and eyewitness accounts cleverly twist the plot, the focus of the narrative shifts to a secondary character and an unreliable narrator who sifts through all available information. Such devices mask the themes and significance of Maugham's short stories, and narrative lapses regularly point to a strongly implied subtext.

Maugham's focus on the evolving role of women:-
Maugham's control over his medium is particularly evident in the three short stories chosen as case studies for this essay: "Daisy" (1896), "The Creative Impulse" (1926), and "The Colonel's Lady" (1946). The basic premise of this research is that a formal analysis of narrative structures provides a basic understanding of Maugham's attitude toward different kinds of storytelling. Moreover, such stylistic analysis helps point to possible interpretations of Maugham's focus on the evolving role of women at the turn of the century, and how he presents female characters' attempts to participate in the cycle of production and consumption of art. Maugham's short prose appears to be based on a stock of Victorian values mingled with early twentieth-century cultural trends; it is steeped in generally accepted historical assumptions (such as novel-writing as an acceptable feminine "bread-winning" activity of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries), but also seems to operate on an apparent contradiction. In his novels, wage-earning domestic labour is not demeaning.

Maugham's female characters write experimental poems or work as stage performers. It is through such characters that Maugham develops themes that recur in his novels: the many ways in which women are socially mistreated, how gossip and slander are used to control women's bodies and sexuality, and how social isolation results from depriving women of wages and direct management of their finances.

Refuting his charge that it is "blind fate" that motivates Maugham's heroes.

In his 1937 study Le Théâtre de W. Somerset Maugham, the critic Paul Dottin describes Maugham's stage heroines as "impulsive, utterly ignorant of social rules", arguing that their "only, so-called virtue is to want something, for good or evil" somehow belying his accusation that it is "blind fate" that drives Maugham's heroes, who "in general, are as determined as those of the Greek theatre". Daisy, thus, among many other similarly constructed female characters, is a perfect blend of strong will, adversity, and unshakable fortune. "Daisy" is one of two short stories from Maugham's early years, "Daisy". The novel, which Maugham sent to the Pseudonym Library, a cheap story series published by T. Fisher Unwin, in 1896, was initially rejected but was later printed in the collection "Orientations", published in 1899. The theatre and the lives of actors are major themes in "Daisy", which also appears to be structured in a dramatic arrangement, since each of its chapters is a kind of tableau dealing with only one specific scene.

The plot, then, could easily have been a simple moral tale. Daisy Griffiths, the beautiful and cultured daughter of the village carpenter, runs off to London with a married cavalry officer. Her family refuses to help her when she needs support and rejects her as a relative; therefore, Daisy begins working as a prostitute, then moves on to become an actress and singer in a touring troupe. Years later, however, the Griffiths find themselves in desperate need of money and consequently try to reconnect with the daughter they had cast out, as she has, in the meantime, married and become a wealthy aristocrat.

Daisy, as a character, is locked in the negative narratives others have constructed about her. By sifting through the layers of gossip and scorn,5 readers can reconstruct, or rather imagine, how Daisy, by severing all claims to meaningful relationships, both social and emotional, wins for herself a kind of freedom, a chance to survive, possibly to thrive. However, a striking aspect of "Daisy" is the persistent impression that the focus has strayed from the center and that time is constantly being shunted: major events are discussed long after they have occurred, their important, often dramatic implications reduced to casual conversations between secondary characters rather than being dealt with directly in the primary narrative. Daisy, the supposed heroine, is directly introduced only in the last part of the story, when her characterization emerges from the text of her letters, and for the first time, her direct expression is given a place in the narrative. Until now, the reader has known about Daisy only through her brother's account of the quarrel between them when he visited her in London, private conversations about her by other characters, and, most importantly, village gossip described in the narrative. Maugham signals the turning point of the story by inverting the moral compass of the villagers and thus neatly reversing the power relations between the characters, when the village news-heralds stop vilifying Daisy for her stupidity, and start blaming Daisy's family's lack of generosity towards their daughter. Indeed, the manner of narration is deliberately distasteful, almost trivial, which is a clear reinforcement of the rewriting process that Daisy is undergoing and which reflects the authentic satirical aim of the story, namely, to expose the spiteful jealousy of the pious Blackstable residents. Overall, it feels like a charming tale that an early craftsman of the literary trade has discarded for the sake of experimenting with form.

Reading "Daisy" as the trials of a nonconforming woman - someone who escapes working in the late Victorian sex trade, builds an acting career, and emerges as the top performer in her touring company - can take a double direction. On the one hand, the "fallen woman" trope is closely associated with the tradition of the distinctly frustrated female heroines of the Victorian canon. Structurally, Maugham's simplistic treatment of the protagonist may remind one, for example, of Elizabeth Gaskell's short stories of fallen daughters that focus on the woman's family (barely mentioning the runaway woman), such as

"Lizzie Leigh" (1850), on the other hand, Daisy's professional career as an artist, which leads to personal satisfaction (and financial stability), echoes the pattern highlighted in Gail Marshall's study "Actresses on the Victorian Stage".

This is shocking rather than arousing sympathy among Maugham's contemporaries.

They also seem to have shocked or upset Maugham's contemporaries more than aroused sympathy, despite their imperfect characterisation. The critic Richard Cordell wrote in 1961 that "the story lacks objectivity, the virtuous people have all the unpleasant qualities and the sinners have excessive charm and generosity". Furthermore, he claims that the ending is shocking because a former prostitute, without remorse, becomes wealthy and not particularly unhappy, and that this is a typical ending for nineteenth-century novels. It is uncertain whether this shock is due to Daisy's fortune, despite her immoral past, or the fact that she somehow manages to remain "without remorse" and at the same time "not particularly unhappy". However, it is useful to note that some of Wilkie Collins's "objective novels", such as "The Fallen Leaves" (1878) and "The New Magdalen" (1873), deal with these very concerns, and present a sympathetic viewpoint that highlights the struggle of their protagonists, who struggle to lead a good life, usually through a respectable marriage, despite the stigmas placed on them by society. Maugham's rewriting of Victorian sexual scripts exists alongside his adoption of a set of themes inspired by the development of reading culture at the end of the century and the decades that followed: the increasing speed of the production cycle and the supply chain of reading and cultural materials. Maugham makes the society and private life of the artist his main subject, and displays a clear concern with how artists view the gap between their preferences and abilities and the public's expectations of their work. Maugham's quest ultimately also includes the continual evolution of women's roles and their attempts to participate in the system of production and consumption of art: his female characters become wonderful interpreters of the sufferings, failures and achievements, attitudes, limitations, and rejections that Maugham eagerly explores in his fictional prose masterpiece.

In the 1926 story "The Creative Impulse", Mrs. Albert Forrester's first outside scene occurs after two-thirds of the story has passed: in it, she is seen boarding buses and trams, crossing the River Thames from Marble Arch, until she reaches Lambeth, a working-class area where her husband has resettled with his former cook, Mrs. Bulfinch. "The Creative Impulse" is the account of a celebrated poet's profitable experiments with commercial fiction, after her wealthy but boring husband leaves her. Mrs. Albert Forrester's mission to win back her husband, or rather his position and income, takes the form of a peculiar kind of compromise: forsaking serious literature for the benefit of novelistic entertainment is not considered venality. Mr. Forrester's sentimental reminder that he has "a fluent, fertile and distinguished pen" prompts Mrs. Bulfinch to suggest that she should write "a good, exciting detective story." There is a well-known writer of poetry and high-grade prose whose work is repeatedly described as unprofitable for publishers, because her books are as critically acclaimed as they are unprofitable to print. However, The Achilles Statue is her best-selling book, published several months after she last met her husband and cook, and, indeed, this short story is included in the list of lucrative activities associated with the promotion of her detective novel: frequent reprints in Britain and America, translations, dramatizations for stage and screen, glowing reviews and skyrocketing sales.

The experience and comfort of handling their own money seems to bind the women characters together, and gives concrete form to the economic situation, so that it culminates the process of emancipation they have had to go through, from learning to do the housework themselves to becoming aware of their income. The situation is the opposite of that of Mrs. Forrester, who is "very independent, and has always been a shrewd manager of her money and assets, and even somehow manages to make a living". Hence, Maugham prefers to tell the stories of such women. Moreover, he alternates between success stories like Mrs. Forrester or Mrs. Bulfinch, who manage to consolidate their independence through their work, and those of more unstable circumstances like Miss Warren, while describing Mrs. Forrester's economic and social misadventures only in the form of short stories.

Maugham's narrative intervention decisively shapes the scene, the first-person interlude, which merges almost seamlessly into an omniscient voice, is responsible for the deeply satirical flavour of the work. The narrator's voice is that of a close member of Mrs. Albert Forrester's circle of literary friends and, possibly, a writer himself, a personified "I", who, for example, admits to being bored by the lady's intellectual tea parties, and when he joins them, he is amazed at the tea parties she attends. He is usually drunk. His physical presence in her saloon, however, conflicts with the fully omniscient nature of the latter half of the short story. The opening sentence, "I think very few people know how Mrs. Albert Forrester wrote The Achilles Statue," directly challenges the final scene in which she conspicuously avoids mentioning the inspiration for her best-selling crime novel.

The implication of a broad context, the sense of pretentious familiarity, and the ease of the bodiless, almost formless voice of the false inter-narrator create a jarring effect when compared with full, unquestionable omniscience. The embodied voice narrating the story, I, is a constant reminder that events are being told from a subjective, biased point of view. On the contrary, the overall effect suggests shaky reliability rather than a reliable testimony. The reader is confronted with a paradoxical situation: a speaking "I" who, despite having been immersed in an objective omniscient narration mode early in the story, accurately describes the memories of others.

Maugham's veiled and subversive narratives can be read as tentative suggestions about this.

Maugham’s masked and deviated narratives might be read as tentative suggestions regarding what could be new, innovative ways to read the world (without overthrowing it). On the whole, the effects of Maugham’s stylistic choices are various. They confer a sense of unreliability to the narration and contribute to the text’s undercurrent ironic tone, which can occasionally verge towards the openly sarcastic, but seems generally restricted to the subtly farcical. Maugham’s narrators, therefore, appear to be accountable for the misunderstandings of extra-textual implications and references, whereas they also foster questions about Maugham’s feminism, his alleged aversion towards experimentalism in the arts, and whether the readability and popularity of his textual production were a priority for him. Finally, they contribute to sustain an identifiable staple in Maugham’s work, that is, his undercurrent attempt to understand where the creative impulse comes from, how it is narrated and normalised, how people (or rather, characters) react to it, and, when they can, profit from it.

The negotiation of women’s roles, women’s values, and women’s creative output in Maugham’s prose, despite not reaching the status of overt political demand, is, however, a material concern that plays out in the thematic treatment of economic matters that Maugham explicitly weaves into his narratives. The “experimentalism” that characters like Daisy, Mrs Forrester, and Evie Hamilton theorise and apply to their fictional lives evokes the confrontational approach that suffragists, among many other women, adopted to voice their requests. The more nuanced stances Maugham depicts, furthermore, help complement (and complicate) the conventional narratives of women’s struggle at the beginning of the twentieth century.

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