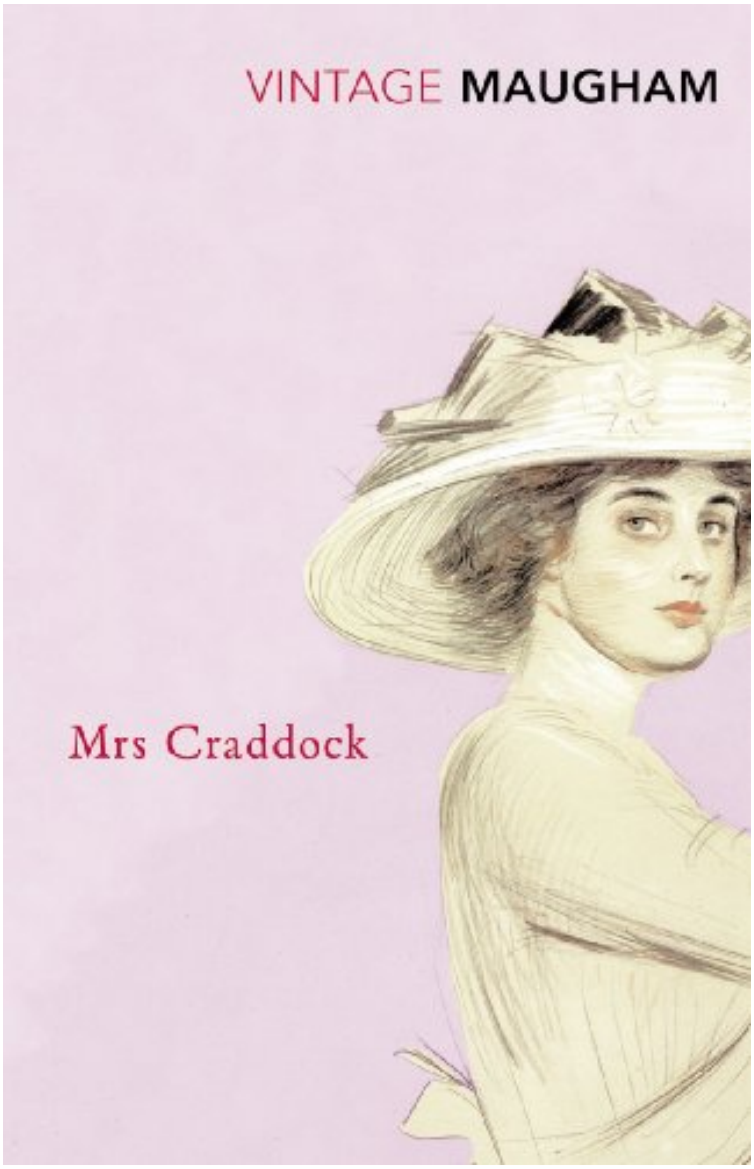
Mrs Craddock



Par W. Somerset Maugham
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[Mobile book] Mrs Craddock

Par W. Somerset Maugham : Mrs Craddock before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Mrs Craddock:

Description : Description du produitA young woman, carried away by passion, sees a chance to escape a dull life and to experience true love. But she discovers that little in her marriage to the dutiful and sensible Edward meets her expectations. And as passion dies, she finds herself trapped in a loveless, oppressive marriage.

Prsentation de l'diteurBertha Ley comes of age, inherits her father's money and promptly marries a handsome, calm and unimaginative man. Bertha is wildly in love with Edward and believes she can be happy playing the role of a dutiful wife in their country home. But, intelligent and sensual, she quickly becomes bored by her oppressively conventional life, and finds her love for her husband slipping away.Originally rejected by publishers, Mrs Craddock was first published only on condition that certain

'shocking' passages were removed. It was thirty years before the full text could be published.ExtraitIntroductionSomerset Maughams first published work, Liza of Lambeth, was a remarkable success for a beginning author. Published in September 1897, the novel was praised by a number of respected critics and, because it was mentioned in a Sunday night sermon at Westminster Abbey, its first printing was sold out. The young writer had demonstrated a deft hand at dialogue, an ability to create a vivid scene with a few carefully selected details, and a gift for drawing memorable characters. The strength of the book, however, lay in its authentic picture of the life of Londons poor that Maugham had observed when his duties as a medical student at St. Thomass Hospital required his venturing into the nearby slums. Protected by his doctors bag, he was led to the bedside of the ill and the dying through the dark and silent streets of Lambeth, up stinking alleys and into sinister courts where the police hesitated to penetrate.Liza of Lambeths detailed re-creation of these experiences within the poor, uneducated underclass of London was timely. Under the influence of the French naturalistsnotably mile Zola, Gustave Flaubert, and Edmond and Jules Goncourtthe last two decades of the nineteenth century had seen an outpouring of British realistic slum fiction. Arthur Morrison used his experiences in Londons East End to write the powerfully evocative Tales of Mean Streets (1894) and A Child of the Jago (1896); George Gissing produced a number of grimly realistic novels, notably Workers in the Dawn (1880) and The Nether World (1889); Rudyard Kipling wrote The Record of Badalia Herodsfoot (1893); and a multitude of lesser-known authorsHubert Crackanthorpe, Edwin Pugh, St. John Adcock, Richard Whiteing, and William Pett Ridge, among othersmade their reputations with stories of the down-and-out of Londons ghettos. Whether by astute planning or by fortunate coincidence, Maugham was able to contribute his own skillfully written and genuine picture of the mean streets to an already popular genre of fiction.It might have been expected that the success of Liza of Lambeth would impel the young author to write more fiction based on his experiences in the London slums or in the outpatients department of St. Thomass Hospital. He had, however, discovered some articles on the novelists craft by the prominent critic Andrew Lang, and he took to heart one particular pronouncement. It was absurd, Maugham recalled Lang declaring, for the young writer to write about his own day and the life about him. What could he know about them? The only novel he could hope to write that might have merit was a historical one. Here his lack of worldly wisdom, his vernal innocence, could be no hindrance. Maugham followed this advice, and his next novel, The Making of a Saint, was a historical romance about Caterina Sforza and the siege of Forli, based on a story from Machiavellis History of Florence. He gathered his material in the reading room of the British Museum and wrote his novel during a summer vacation on Capri. The result was a failure: all the qualitiesunderstatement, irony, realism, and detachmentthat had transformed Maughams experience in the slums into compelling fiction were unsuited to historical romance. On its publication in 1898, he said, The critics received it with coolness and the public with indifference. Years later he wrote in his nephew Robins copy: A very poor novel by W. Somerset Maugham.The failure of The Making of a Saint undermined the modest reputation Maugham had earned with Liza of Lambeth,and he was quick to learn his lesson. As he said much later, he came to realize that Langs dictum was nonsense. In the first twenty-five years of his life the youth has gathered a multitude of impressions; if he has the novelists instincts he will probably have felt them more vividly than he will ever feel anything again; and the persons he has known, he will have known with an intimacy that in the turmoil and hurry of after life he will never achieve again. Who has ever known anyone later in such minute detail as a boy has known his relations, their friends and servants?Mrs Craddock was Maughams next novel, though publishers apprehensions about its contents delayed its publication until 1902, a year after The Hero, and it was solidly grounded on the experiences of the authors early life. Maugham was born in Paris in 1874 to the wife of an English solicitor attached to the British embassy, and on the deaths of his mother when he was eight years old and his father two years later, he was sent to Kent to live with an aunt and an uncle, Henry MacDonald Maugham, the vicar of the seaside town of Whitstable. The couple were in their fifties and childless, and a small boy was an intrusion into a well-ordered household. Though young Willie grew to have some sort of affectionate relationship with his aunt, his unclefrom all accounts a narrow-minded, pedantic, lazy, and severe manremained distant and unsympathetic. The effect on Maugham of this unhappy arrangement is indelibly captured in an entry in A Writers Notebook: He had so little love when he was small that later it embarrassed him to be loved.Because of the vicars position in the community, the young Maugham got to observe the manners, customs, and attitudes of a rigidly stratified society, and, remembering the titled and cultured people who came to his parents stylish apartment on the Avenue dAntin, he grew up with a contempt for the narrow social life of Kent. He was ashamed of the way in which his uncle deferred to the more important

figures in the small community. My uncle toadied to the local squire, he told his nephew, and the man was just a vulgar lout. Hed never have been tolerated in my mothers drawing-room. My uncle was a cracking snob. I was never allowed even to speak to the local tradesmen.From an early age Maugham longed to escape from the emotional bleakness of the vicarage and from the narrowness of Whitstable life. Though it was some years before he was free, he found one form of escape that was to remain with him for the rest of his lifereadingand, ironically, he owed this discovery to his uncles considerable library. At least temporarily he could shake off the unhappiness of his physical confines and escape into the worlds ofThe Book of a Thousand and One Nights, Lewis Carrolls Alices Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass, Sir Walter Scotts Waverley novels, and the adventure stories of Captain Marryat. Thus Maugham formed what he called in Of Human Bondage the most delightful habit in the world, one that provided him with a refuge from all the distress of life.At the age of eleven, Maugham was boarded at The Kings School, six miles away in Canterbury, and he found the life there no more satisfying. Graphically described in the autobiographical Of Human Bondage, it was a miserable time for a small, shy boy with a stammer: Maugham was bullied by older, bigger boys, tormented by insensitive schoolmasters for whose intellects he had no respect, and bored by an unimaginative curriculum (more than once his name appeared in the School Black Book of boys misdeeds for inattention and gross inattention). He endured this existence for four years until, persuading his uncle that he should be permitted to study German in Heidelberg for several years, he left Kent behind.Maugham had been born and spent his early childhood in Paris; twice during his Kings School days he had lived for several months in Hyres, on the French Riviera, when it appeared that he might be developing tuberculosis; and in Heidelberg he felt that he was in touch with the larger, cosmopolitan European world again. His two years in Germany were an intellectual awakening, and he came away with an understanding of many of the great avant-garde European writersHenrik Ibsen, Henry Becque, and othersthe works of revolutionary composers such as Richard Wagner; and the ideas of the most influential philosophers, Arthur Schopenhauer and Benedict Spinoza. When Maugham returned to England at the age of eighteen, it was not to Kent but to London, first as an apprentice chartered accountant and then, in the autumn of 1892, as a medical student at St. Thomass.Throughout his medical training Maugham maintained his contact with Whitstable until the death of the vicar in September 1897 severed the family connection. His periodic returns to the vicarage and the life of rural Kent reminded him of the narrowness and constraint from which he had fled, and he recorded his impressions in his notebook. These observations were, he commented later, the expressions of a very young mans reaction to real life, or what he thought was such, and to liberty, after the sheltered and confined existence, perverted by fond fancies and the reading of novels, which was natural to a boy in the class in which I was born; and they are the expression of his revolt from the ideas and conventions of the environment in which he had been brought up.Maugham may have revolted against the provincial ideas and conventions of Whitstable and Canterbury, but he never left them behind. In different ways they became a fundamental element of some of his best-known fiction. In Of Human Bondage, published in 1915, they are described almost clinically as part of the forces that shape the protagonists character and over which he must triumph if he is to become truly independent. In Cakes and Ale, which appeared fifteen years later, the portrayal is softened by a kind of warm nostalgia, though the mores and customs of rural Kent are still the disapproving background against which the more boisterous and sensual characters must rebel. In his earliest fiction dealing with his Kentish backgrounda short story called Daisy and Mrs Craddockthe tone is sharper, more satiric, and, because the experience was still so fresh in his mind, less forgiving.Daisy, which Maugham said he wrote when he was eighteen and which was published in his short story collectionOrientations in 1899, tells how a young Blackstable girl elopes with a married army officer and is thus made an outcast from her family and her community. Abandoned by her lover, she is reduced to prostitution but escapes this life to become a theatrical star and to marry an aristocrat. Now affluent and having social status, she attempts to become reconciled with her family but is rejected, particularly by her rigidly unforgiving father. Daisy nonetheless settles 15 a week on them, but the story ends with her leaving Blackstable and her family forever.Blackstableas it is in Mrs Craddock, Of Human Bondage, and Cakes and Aleis, of course, a thinly disguised Whitstable, and when Daisy takes a last, nostalgic walk through its streets before she departs, Maugham describes a town and its people he knew well:Daisy walked down the High Street slowly looking at the houses she remembered, and her lips quivered a little; at every step smells blew across to her full of memoriesthe smell of a tannery, the blood smell of a butchers shop, the sea-odour from a shop of fishermens clothes. . . . She looked at the booths she knew so well, the boats drawn up for the winter, whose names she knew, whose owners she had known from her

childhood . . . and she looked at the grey sea; a sob burst from her; but she was very strong, and at once she recovered herself. . . . At last she came to the station, and sat in the waiting room, her heart full of infinite sadnessthe terrible sadness of the past.In Daisys bittersweet final departure from Blackstable, it is easy to see Maughams own farewell to his past, and it is presented with the contempt of a young man who, like his protagonist, sees himself as part of the world far beyond its narrow and parochial boundaries. The townspeople are shown to be full of pretension, insincerity, and love of gossip. There is a good deal of religious hypocrisy and petty vindictiveness, and the text is dotted with ironic comments about Christian, Christian way, and Providence. Daisys weak and indecisive father is especially contemptible, initially concerned about her but then assuming the narrow voice of Victorian morality, prepared to forgive her when she is suffering for her sins but loathing her when she surmounts them to achieve success and happiness.Mrs Craddock is another farewell to Maughams youth and upbringing, and it too is firmly grounded in his experiences of Kent. Here, as in Of Human Bondage and Cakes and Ale, the neighboring town of Tercanbury is based on Canterbury, and Faversley stands for Faversham. For Court Leys, the country house that Bertha Craddock has inherited, Maugham drew on his memories of Court Lees, an estate he would have seen a few miles out of Whitstable. The Regis (that is, King) School that Edward Craddock attended is clearly meant to be the authors own school, The Kings School, Canterbury. Beyond the names, there are a great many details in Mrs Craddock that indicate that Maugham captured the life of his corner of Kent as faithfully as he had described Londons slums in Liza of Lambeth.The French scholar Joseph Dobrinsky has written that Mrs Craddock depicts with passionate veracity a painful experience of the author, and there can be little doubt that, despite the gender transposition, there are autobiographical elements in the portrayal of Bertha Craddock. Like Maugham, Bertha has spent some of her formative years on the Continent, educated as best could be in a half a dozen countries while traveling with her father after her mothers death. When Bertha was eighteen, her father died in Naples, and she spent the next three years touring Europe with her maiden aunt, experiencing the great cities, the ancient churches, and the art of the greatest galleries. Just as Maugham had become cosmopolitan in his years in France and Germany, Bertha developed a sophistication that alienates her from the parochial life of her native Kent. By contrast, her husbands experience of the world has remained as circumscribed and provincial as his education at the Regis School.Surely, too, in the final pages of the novel, Berthas retreat into literature and music as an escape from her empty marriage and the ennui of her life in rural Kent comes from the authors own experience. Like the young Philip in Of Human Bondageand perhaps the Maugham who all his life traveled with a bag full of booksshe finds in reading a refuge from all the distress of life. She reads the Renaissance epic Orlando Furioso, John Lylys Euphues, the poetry of Paul Verlaine, the memoirs of Saint-Simon, Edward Gibbons The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, and Cervantess Don Quixote. Bertha found reality tolerable, writes Maugham, when it was merely a background, a foil to the fantastic happenings of old books; she looked at the green trees, and the song of birds mingled agreeably with her thoughts still occupied with the Dolorous Knight of La Mancha, with Manon Lescaut, or the joyous band that wanders through the Decameron. . . . Living away from the present, in an artificial paradise, Bertha was happy.Bertha thus retreats from the disappointments of her emotional life into a world of detachment, ideas, and cosmopolitanism. In doing this she begins to emulate her aunt Polly Ley. Throughout the novel, Miss Leys cool objectivity and compassionate, non-judgmental detachment serve as a foil for her nieces unrestrained passion, but at the end the younger woman adopts her aunts outlook on life.Miss Ley must surely be a rarity among fictional characters in having a novel dedicated to her, as she is in Maughams Epistle Dedicatory to the early editions of Mrs Craddock. There he claims to have first met her in Naples, in the Gallery of Masterpieces while looking at a statue of Agrippina, a work of art that many years later he claimed was itself the inspiration for her character. It has been suggested, however, that the real model for Miss Ley was Maughams Aunt Julia, who had cultivated a close friendship with a very much younger man. Maughams own relationship with Julia was warm enough that he dedicated The Hero to her in 1901, and on her death nine years later, she left him her house near Hyde Park.Miss Ley resembles Julia Maugham in some aspects, but it is very much more likely that she was based on Mrs. George W. Steevens, to whom Maugham dedicated The Explorer in 1907. Like many of the stage women of the time, she was a woman with a past, having suffered social exile because, as one of the mistresses of Sir Charles Dilke, she had a role in his divorce. Following this scandal, she rehabilitated her reputation with charitable work and married the very much younger George Steevens, a respected journalist who was killed while covering the Boer War for the Daily Mail in 1900. Having an independent income, Mrs. Steevens became one of Londons lion-hunting society hostesses, entertaining

intellectual and bohemian London in her London flat and her house, Merton Abbey, situated about eight miles out of the city. Among the painters, actors, and writers who might be found at one of her evenings were Max Beerbohm, Henry Arthur Jones, Reggie Turner, George Street, William Pett Ridge, and the young Willie Maugham.Maugham appreciated Mrs. Steevenss wit, still sharp and lively for a septuagenarian, and was amused by her iconoclastic good sense. Because of the considerable difference in their ages, there was no sexual tension between them, and they developed the close relationship so common between homosexual men and older women. Like Miss Ley with Bertha, Mrs. Steevens lived apart from the pressures of Maughams professional career and the complications of his emotional life, and so she became a trusted confidante and mentor.Maugham introduced Miss Ley in Mrs Craddock and developed her character more fully in The Merry-Go-Round,published in 1904 (in one of those careless slippages to which authors are sometimes prone, she is called variously Mary Ley and Polly Ley in both novels). Part confidante, part raisonneuse, and part chorus, she looks on the pretensions and follies of the other characters with a witty cynicism; at the same time, she observes their suffering with sensitivity and sympathy. She is an amusing commentator, fully independent, intelligent, and free of humbug.Miss Ley may have been based on Mrs. Steevens but, as Maughams autobiographical writings reveal, she voices many of the authors own beliefs (particularly in The Merry-Go-Round). Thus she marks an important stage in Maughams development as an author: in Laurence Branders words, she is the first character in the oeuvre whom we can describe as typically Maugham. Her persona, writes Frederic Raphael, is the first to have the Maughamian quality of detached worldliness that he was to wish on Willie Ashenden and finally on the character whom he called Mr Maugham.Indeed, from Mrs Craddock on, in both his fiction and drama, Maugham increasingly told his stories through the eyes of detached, cynical observers or through a first-person narrator who places the reader at a filtered distance from the action. In The Moon and Sixpence, the amoral, compulsive painter Charles Strickland is described by a narrator who, being an author immersed in the London social and literary milieu, looks upon the tempests of his life with amusement and detachment. In Cakes and Ale, the narrator is again a writer who amuses himself by giving a portrait of a celebrated author, Edward Driffield, which undercuts the false, bowdlerized picture given the public by his first wife and her friends. Here the narrator is called Willie Ashenden, the same name given the cynical British espionage agent in Ashenden, a short-story collection based on Maughams experiences in World War I and published in 1928. By the time that he wrote The Razors Edge sixteen years later, the novelist and the narrator had virtually become one, and the avuncular cosmopolitan author who observes the passions and misadventures of a younger generation is called Mr. Maugham.V. S. Pritchett once described the narrator of so much of Maughams fictionand one might include here the many characters who function therein as shrewd and literate observersas the Great Dry Martini in person. It was in both forms a persona that Anthony Burgess declared unique: Here again was something that English fiction neededthe dispassionate commentator, the raisonneur, the man at home in Paris and Vienna but also in Seoul and Djakarta, convivial and clubbable, as ready for a game of poker as for a discussion on the Racine alexandrine, the antithesis of the slippered bookman. Miss Ley, at home in Florence and Paris, familiar with the social and cultural life of London, and ready to puncture the pretensions of the hidebound characters who frequent Court Leys, is the first of such voices in Maughams writing.Set against the cosmopolitanism and culture of Bertha and Miss Ley is Berthas husband, Edward, who, as the anonymous reviewer in Academy and Literature recognized within weeks of the novels appearance, is its most fully delineated character:The character of Edward Craddock, the gentleman-farmer, is drawn with absolute conviction. His lack of imagination, his impassivity, his equanimity, his good nature, his utter inability to put himself in anothers place, even the trait of obstinate vanity which leads to his too timely deathall these things combine to make a human mediocrity that is vividly alive.Born into the yeoman classthat is, the class of small landowners and farmersCraddock rises to the squirearchy through his marriage to Bertha, who has inherited Court Leys and the surrounding land. This betrothal, proposed and pursued with great vigor by Bertha, evokes outrage in her guardian, Dr. Ramsay, because Edward is not a gentleman and he seems to be interested in Bertha only for her money. As the squire of Court Leys, however, Craddock proves to be a good manager and careful businessman, and the estate thrives once again after years of neglect.Ironically, at the time when his wife has grown beyond the values and outlook of the landed gentry of which her family has been part for a century, Craddock becomes almost a caricature of the British squire of the late nineteenth century. He is, writes Richard Cordell, unimaginative, narrowly patriotic, energetically a good fellow, conservative, virtuous. He is a stupid and a happy man. He has no doubts, no struggles, no self-criticism. Craddock is also a philistine, insensitive, and smugly patriarchal in dealing with his wife.

Women, he says, are like chickens. . . . Give em a good run, properly closed in with stout wire netting, so that they cant get into mischief, and when they cluck and cackle just sit tight and take no notice.Published in November 1902, Mrs Craddock is technically an Edwardian novel, but since it was written several years earlier, it should more properly be considered one of the last pieces of British Victorian fiction. Moreover, its creation and publication occurred on either side of one of the profoundly important watershed events in the history of the British national character: the Boer War, when for two years a small and sparely equipped band of South African farmers and guerrilla fighters held the worlds greatest imperial power at bay. At the start of the war in 1899, the mood of the British ruling and moneyed classes was optimism and certaintythe empire, and its prestige and wealth, would inexorably grow. After the war, in which the Boers won much of what they had been fighting for, the country was shaken by doubt and the fear that its imperial power was waning.Edward Craddock, however, being a late VictorianMaugham identified the period in which the action of Mrs Craddock takes place as the 1890shas none of these doubts and fears. He is sure of his right to control the estate of Court Leys, to rule his country (I tell you, he brags to his wife, I shall be an M. P. before I die), and to see that country dominate much of the world. He is convinced that there is no better music than good honest homely English airs and that the English are morally superior to the other races. What we want now, he tells Bertha, is purity and reconstitution of the national life. Im in favour of English morals, English homes, English mothers, and English habits. It is the same confident jingoism that elicits thunderous applause when he speaks during his campaign to be elected a county councilor: He turned the tap of patriotism full on; it gurgled out in a stream. He blew the penny trumpets of English purity, and the tin whistles of the British Empire, and he beat the big drum of the Great Anglo-Saxon race. He thanked God he was an Englishman and not as others are.As Mrs Craddock progresses, Craddock grows into his position of squire of Court Leys, and that growth is not merely in arrogance, complacency, and self-centeredness. In the opening pages, when Bertha is infatuated with the twenty-eight-year-old farmer, he is slender, youthful, and masculine. Within a few years of marriage and life as a landed gentleman, however, he begins to put on weight and change shape. He was filling out, observes Miss Ley, prosperity and a consciousness of his great importance had broadened his back and straightened his shoulders; he was quite three inches more round the chest than when she had first known him, and his waist had proportionately increased. If he goes on developing in this way, she thought, the good man will be colossal by the time hes forty. In other words, if Craddock continues to develop as he has been doing, he will soon be the human equivalent of John Bull, the traditional cartoon caricature of self-satisfied, prosperous, middle-class Britain.In making Court Leys, a country house, the focal point of Mrs Craddock, Maugham anticipated a practice that became common among British novelists in the decade that followed the books publication. In Edwardian Fiction,Jefferson Hunter provides a selection of these literary houses and offers an explanation for such a focus:Worsted Skeynes, Robin Hill, Overdene, Hamlyns Purliew, Flickerbridge, Mundham, Burbeck, Catchmore, Weatherend, Newmarch, Matcham, Fawns, Mertle, Beccles, Holm Oaks, Bladesover, Lady Grove, Crest Hill, Pendragon, Friars Pardon, Violet Hill, Holmescroft, Hawkins Old Farm, Baskerville Hall, Windy Corner, Cadover, Oniton Grange, Howards Endthese are the country houses of Edwardian fiction, and even when listed partially they suggest how heavily the imagination of the decade was invested in landed property.Novelists used the big house for a number of reasonsone of the simplest being as a confined space within which their fiction could operatebut in many cases, as Hunter points out, the country house was a definition of England itself. What happens within the house and its environs, and to its occupants, becomes a microcosm of what is happening to the country as a whole. For example, the question of ownership of Howards End, in E. M. Forsters novel of the same name, really stands for the question of who should control England: the generous, cultured middle class as embodied by the Schlegel sisters or the entrepreneurs and men of business as exemplified by the men of the Wilcox family.These contesting approaches are epitomized early in the novel by the clash between Henrys management of Howards End and his first wifes wishes for the house, the ancestral home she has brought into the marriage. Enamored of machinery and modernization, and insensitive to her love of tradition and a more organic life, Henry has the horse paddock converted to a garage. As the novel goes on and Mrs. Wilcox dies, Henrys remarriage, to Margaret Schlegel, is meant to represent a synthesis of the two fundamentally different approaches to life and society, and Margarets ultimate ownership of Howards End is Forsters formula for the future for the country.Eight years before Forster had created Howards End, Maugham had given readers Court Leys, and he anticipated Forster by showing the clash between Edward Craddocks utilitarian management of the estate that he, like Henry Wilcox, has assumed by marriage and Berthas reverence for her familys tradition. Having become well

established as the master of Court Leys, Edward orders a hedgerow of six beeches to be cut down because nothing will grow under them. He may be sentimental about romantic melodrama, but when it came to business it was another matter: the sort of sentiment that asks a farmer to spare a sylvan glade for esthetic reasons is absurd. Edward would have willingly allowed advertisers to put up boards on the most beautiful part of his estate, if thereby he could have surreptitiously increased the profits of his farm. For Bertha, however, the beeches represent the best of her familys past, which, though she disdains the ethos of the contemporary landed gentry, she respects. These trees were planted nearly a hundred years ago, she tells her husband, and I would sooner die than cut them down. Moreover, she adds defiantly, if you have the trees cut down, I shall leave you. But just as Mrs. Wilcox loses her battle to save the paddock, Bertha cannot save the beeches, and Court Leys continues to be reshaped according to Edwards philistine vision. And Bertha keeps her word and leaves her husband.At the end of Mrs Craddock, it is this arrogant and egocentric certainty in his own right to control his world that leads to Edwards death. Knowing that he is an expert rider, he is never shy of parading his powers nor loath to taunt others with their inferior skills or courage, and so he prefers the challenge of riding notoriously unmanageable horses. On one occasion he is thrown by a roan that balks at a rail fence, and he breaks his collarbone. Several weeks later, against the urgings of Bertha and everyone else, he stubbornly takes the same horse over the same course, and he is killed when he is again thrown at the fence.Whether Maugham intended it or not, Craddocks death has a significance beyond merely freeing Bertha from a marriage that has become burdensome to her: it means the end of Court Leys as a thriving big house of the landed gentry. Bertha, who has never been attracted to the life of the squirearchy in provincial Kent, intends to rent out the estate and to return to Italy, where she has always felt more at home. Bertha and Edwards only child was stillborn, and so there will be no heirs to Court Leys. The novel is thus a dramatization of what Maugham wrote in his 1955 preface: It was the end of an era, but the landed gentry, who were soon to lose the power they had so long enjoyed, were the last to have a suspicion of it. . . . They were gentlefolk. It is true that for the most part they were narrow, stupid and intolerant; prudish, formal and punctilious.Looking back on Mrs Craddock so many years later, Maugham would claim only that it is a picture, faithful, I believe, of life in a corner of England during the last years of the nineteenth century. This assertion, like many of his self-judgments, is too modest: his novel not only provides a reliable depiction of a particular way of life, it offers a critique of a segment of the upper middle class well before it became a common practice in British fiction to do so. So often in his career, Maugham seemed to be a literary chameleon, sensitive to the popular taste and literary styles of a particular period and skillful in adapting his work to their colorations. Though based on his experiences in the London slums, Liza of Lambeth appeared at a time when realistic slum novels were in vogue in Britain. His autobiographical novel of adolescence, Of Human Bondage, was published in 1915, when the bildungsroman was immensely popular (James Joyces A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, D. H. Lawrences Sons and Lovers, and Compton MacKenziesSinister Street had all been published just two years earlier). Four years later, The Moon and Sixpence joined the long list of Knstlerromane, or artist-hero novels, that were fascinating jaded and disillusioned postwar readers. Finally, in 1944, though Maugham was then seventy years old, he caught the spirit of a new generation with The Razors Edge,his novel about Indian mysticism as an escape from the American Dream.With Mrs Craddock, however, Maugham had few models to copy. The social problems spawned by the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century had given rise to what were called condition-of-England novels, among which were Benjamin Disraelis Sybil (1845), Elizabeth Gaskells Mary Barton (1848) and North and South (1855), Charlotte Bronts Shirley (1849), Charles Kingsleys Alton Locke (1850), and Charles Dickenss Hard Times (1854). Also known as industrial novels, they focused, however, on the rising working class and its inevitable conflicts with the owners, as well as on the poverty and social ills that accompanied the dramatic urbanization of Britain. Even at the end of the Victorian era, the novelists who seriously treated social issuesGeorge Gissing, Arthur Morrison, Thomas Hardy, and otherswrote about the lower classes.The Edwardian period, in the years following the publication of Mrs Craddock, saw a major shift in emphasis in social novels as authors turned their attention to the middle class. They had begun to recognize that the condition of England and the future of the country were being shaped by the middle class, which was growing in size, power, and complexity. Thus, when Forster poses the question of who should control Britain in Howards End, he does not look outside the middle class for the answer. The range of his interest lies between the lower-middle-class Leonard Bast and his wife and the upper-middle-class nouveau-riche Wilcox family.Forster had already written about the middle class in Where Angels Fear to Tread in 1905, and Arnold Bennett did so in Clayhanger, published in 1910. H. G. Wells, one of the most prolific and

persuasive analysts of the British class system, had written a critique of the British squirearchy in the form of a satiric fantasy, The Wonderful Visit, in 1895, but most of his early works of fiction were scientific romances. It was not until Kipps (1905), Tono-Bungay (1909), and The History of Mr Polly (1910) that he produced the studies of the middle and lower classes for which he is admired. John Galsworthys The Man of Property (1906), the first novel of his Forsyte Saga trilogy, dramatized the same kinds of conflicts between culture and Mammon presented in Howards End, and in the process he offered the finest portrait of the philistine nouveau-riche man of business in Soames Forsyte.A year after the publication of The Man of Property, Galsworthy wrote The Country House, a novel with affinities toMrs Craddock. The estate to which the title refers is Worsted Skeynes, owned by Horace Pendyce and the center of the doings of a number of representative figures of the time: Horaces brother, a major general; the local rector; a member of Parliament; a justice of the peace; several lawyers; and Horaces wife and three children. The Country House begins with a witty catalogue of the society of Worsted Skeynes, and many of its pages, like those of Mrs Craddock, present a detailed satiric picture of the narrowness and pretensions of that society. But, whereas Maugham remains contemptuous of the landed gentry throughout his novel, Galsworthy equivocates in his criticism. In Jefferson Hunters words, Galsworthy cannot decide about the country house. He disapproves of its way of life but he enjoys ithe is a disillusioned insider who cannot bear to leave. Thus he contrives a sentimental ending, one which stretches the credibility of several important characters and alters the tone of his writing.Despite these differences, there are some interesting parallels between The Country House and Mrs Craddock,particularly in the wives of the squires of the houses. Fifty-two years of age, Mrs. Pendyce is much older than Bertha Craddock and, having been a squires wife for many years, she has learned to play the part with patience, silence, and obedience. She enjoys the benefits of being the lady of the house, but she has paid a heavy price, as Galsworthy reminds us in describing Mrs. Pendyces Sunday morning habit of waiting meekly for her husband to summon her to go to church:She had sat there till her hair, once dark-brown, was turning grey; she would sit there until it was white. . . . But all this was to be expected, nothing out of the common; the same thing was happening in hundreds of country houses throughout the three kingdoms, and women were waiting for their hair to turn white, who, long before, at the altar of a fashionable church, had parted with their imaginations and all the changes and chances of this mortal life.Mrs. Pendyce, representing as she does so many women of her class, is Berthas possible future, what she could have become had she allowed her own imagination to be stifled by Edwards patronizing of her and by her role as the wife of a country squire.Bertha, however, possesses too many elements of the New Woman of the turn of the centuryvitality, independence of mind, and sophisticationto allow her to surrender her essential self to Edwards view of her role as his wife. Being in her twenties and in the early years of her marriage, she has more at stake in the struggle for power in Court Leys than Mrs. Pendyce does in Worsted Skeynes, and her battle is presented more starkly. Nowhere is this more obvious than in an episode in The Country House that is so reminiscent of one in Mrs Craddock that it is hard to believe that Galsworthy did not have Maughams novel in mind. Worsted Skeynes has an orchard of cherry and pear trees, and Mrs. Pendyce, brought up in an old Totteridge [her family] tradition that fruit trees should be left to themselves, opposes her husbands determination to prune them according to newer methods. She had fought for these trees, writes Galsworthy. They were as yet the only things she had fought for in her married life, and Horace Pendyce still remembered with a discomfort robbed by time of poignancy how she had stood with her back to their bedroom door and said, If you cut those poor trees, Horace, I wont live here! Unlike Edward, Horace backs down in the face of his wifes ultimatum, and the trees are never pruned; and unlike Bertha, Mrs. Pendyce abandons neither the house nor her husband.But though Mrs. Pendyce remains at Worsted Skeynes, where her essential selfgenerous, graceful, and humaneis buried behind a mask of gentility, she nonetheless leaves the house so that, in The Country Houses sentimental conclusion, she can save her son and her family from scandal and ruin. It is only a temporary removal to London, however, and at the novels end she is again the chatelaine of the Pendyce estate.Because so much of the satire in The Country House is weakened by Galsworthys desire for a happy ending, his novel is inferior to Mrs Craddock, published five years earlier, as a critique of the British landed gentry. Indeed, a case can be made that Maugham is too often ignored in studies of the British social novel of the turn of the twentieth century. In The Modern British Novel, for example, Malcolm Bradbury writes:H. G. Wellsnow directly portraying Edwardian life with its commercial enterprise, its new social types and possibilities, and speaking up for the new classes, the new men and women, and the new spirit of sex, all of this seen in a light of a great world-historical visionseemed a prototype of the modern. So did Arnold Bennett and John Galsworthy, exploring the social texture of a

changing age that had left Victorianism well behind.On the strength of Mrs Craddockand on the depictions of some aspects of Victorian/Edwardian life in Liza of Lambeth, The Hero, The Merry-Go-Round, and The ExplorerMaugham deserves to be included in this group.But Maugham did not intend Mrs Craddock to be social history; the social setting is the background for his real interest: Berthas story of romance, passion, unrequited love, the failure of a marriage, and the necessity to fight for emotional independence. In telling this tale, too, Maugham was ahead of his time, advanced enough in his treatment of womens sexuality that few publishers were prepared to handle the novel.In terms of the form of the novel, Maugham was never much of an experimenter, preferring to leave innovations in chronology and the oblique point of view to Joseph Conrad; in the interior monologue to James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and others; and in surrealistic comedy to Evelyn Waugh and Ronald Firbank. In content, however, Maugham often pushed the limits of what was acceptable on the page or the stage, and from time to time he went beyond them. The Lord Chamberlains Office, responsible for licensing plays in Great Britain, frequently demanded deletions of sexual or religious references from his playsit required, for example, that the report of the discovery (offstage) of a pair of illicit lovers be made by a male character rather than a young woman, whose innocent eyes were not supposed to witness such sights. Fisher Unwin, the first publisher of Liza of Lambeth, insisted that the word bellyused as it was to refer to a womanbe replaced by stomach, and Methuen, having set up Maughams novel The Magician (1908) in proof, nevertheless decided against publishing it, very likely because of the female protagonists lurid sexual fantasies. When William Heinemann agreed to publish Of Human Bondage, an important part of which is the promiscuous behavior of a cockney waitress, he felt compelled to put an extraordinary clause in the contract, requiring Maugham to return a portion of his advance if the lending libraries found the books contents objectionable.The publishers unease about Maughams treatment of subjects over which writers had traditionally drawn a discreet Victorian veil is reflected in Maughams correspondence with his first agent. At one point he felt the need to assure J. B. Pinker that I can be trusted to be suitably moral, and later he wrote that My novels have apparently been too shocking for the American public. . . . I dont think there is anything in Loaves and Fishes [a play] that would bring a blush to the cheeks of an American matron.Maugham had good reason to be defensive after the reception accorded Mrs Craddock. It was thought extremely daring, he later wrote, and was refused by publisher after publisher, among others by William Heinemann; but it was at last read by Robertson Nicoll, a partner in the firm of Hodder and Stoughton, and he, though of opinion that it was not the sort of book his own firm should publish, thought well enough of it to urge William Heinemann to reconsider his decision. Heinemann read it himself and, on the condition that I took out passages that he found shocking, agreed to publish it. Maugham made the deletions, Heinemann published the novel, and, following some critical success, reissued it a year later; in 1920 George Doran brought out the first American edition. It was not until 1928, when Heinemann and Doran both published new editions based on the original manuscript, that the public could read Mrs Craddock as its author had first written it twenty-three years earlier.Maugham later confessed that he could not for the life of me imagine what the offending passages were, and that he did not have the patience to compare the manuscript to the expurgated first edition. It was his bibliographer, Raymond Toole Stott, who first read the two versions side by side, and he demonstrated that Heinemanns excisions were those that explicitly revealed the female protagonists sexual urge, particularly her desire for her young cousin, Gerald Vaudrey:FIRST EDITIONREVISED EDITION. . . they might be separated by ten thousand miles, but they would always be joined together. How else could she prove to him her wonderful love, how else could she show her immeasurable gratitude?. . . they might be separated by ten thousand miles, but there would always be the bond between them. Her flesh cried out to his flesh, and and the desire was irresistible. How else could she prove to him her wonderful love? How else could she show her immeasurable gratitude?. . . She gave way; she no longer wished to resist. She turned her face to Gerald.. . . She gave way, she no longer wished to resist, flesh called to flesh, and there was no force on earth more powerful. Her whole frame was quivering with passion. She turned her face to Gerald.A more extensive analysis of the two versions is provided by C. Heywood in his 1967 article titled Two Printed Texts of Somerset Maughams Mrs Craddock, and he offers some interesting speculation on the nature of the deletions demanded by Heinemann in 1902. Heywood points out that the editors censoring hand was as heavy on Berthas passion for her husband, both before and after their marriage, as it was on her attraction to Gerald. I want to be his wife, she gasped, in the extremity of her passion; a confession here expressed as a private thought, it was considered offensive, as was her taking the initiative as an amorous wife: He sat down and she put her arms around his neck. Indeed, claims Heywood, any form of interest in the body shown by

Berthaher own body became her personwas abridged, even details about her pregnancy and childbirth. Any references to the duration and pain of childbirth were cut, to the point that the simile like a woman when first she is with child was dropped from Berthas perception of the germinating life of the Kentish springtime. And when her child is stillborn, her request of the nurse, let me see the whole body, was seen to be too blunt and so was deleted.Even in its bowdlerized form, Mrs Craddock shocked some reviewers and many readers. An unsigned review called The Strong Crude Novel in Academy and Literature observed that some pages are as crude as the crudest parts ofLiza of Lambeth and in a more offensive way, and Maughams friend Augustus Hare, known for his guidebooks to various parts of the Continent, noted in his diary that both he and Basil Wilberforce, the archdeacon of Westminster Abbey, much regretted the authors Zola-like realism and that his great talent was not devoted to nobler aims. Even the Bookmans St. John Adcock, a respected critic, wrote of Bertha that with all her birth and breeding, she is a woman in whom the primitive animal instincts are strongly developed. Mrs Craddock, he concluded, was a subtle and even masterly study of a certain feminine temperament that is not so uncommon as we would like to believe.Adcocks as we would like to believe is a revealing, if unintended, comment on the attitudes toward female sexuality in 1902, and it gets to the heart of the difficulties Maugham faced in securing a publisher for Mrs Craddock.Bertha is very likely representative of a great many young women of the time who were asserting themselves socially, intellectually, and, especially, sexually. What were uncommon were novels that portrayed such women explicitly and positively. Two years after his review, Adcock put the problem into historical perspective when he wrote of Mrs Craddock in Gods of Modern Grub Street that good as it is, the times were not ripe for such frank handling of sex mysteries.Thirteen years after the publication of the abridged Mrs Craddock, D. H. Lawrence discovered that the times were no more ripe when his novel The Rainbow was suppressed for its treatment of sexuality. He persevered with Women in Love, published privately in 1920, and then with his notorious Lady Chatterleys Lover, which was not permitted to be read in its unexpurgated form by the general public until the 1950s. Lawrence is now rightly regarded as the author who most vigorously challenged the Victorian inhibition about sexuality that hung over British literature like a cloud in the early twentieth century, but Maugham deserves some of the recognition.Sex lies at the heart of Mrs Craddock, but in a curious kind of way the novel is a rebuttal of Lawrence well before Lawrence had begun to present his ideas of the blood consciousness and the need to surrender to the sexual urge in relationships between men and women. It has been suggested that, in writing of Bertha Craddock, Maugham was following the model of Gustave Flauberts Madame Bovary, and C. Heywood has gone as far as to claim that Maugham was influenced by The Doctors Wife, an English novel written in imitation of Flauberts great work by Mary Elizabeth Braddon in 1864. Maughams title, Mrs Craddock, would seem to echo those of both earlier novels, and his plota womans growing dissatisfaction with her marriage to an unromantic and unresponsive manis similar.Maugham, however, takes the story in a fundamentally different direction. Whereas Emma is a romantic woman dreaming of a glamorous and stylish life, and sees her lover as a means of escaping her banal provincial existence, Bertha is realistic, intellectual, but highly sexed. Her sexuality draws her not to a man who is superior to her in class and experience in the larger world, but to one who is below her and of the soil. The attraction is clearly physical: Edward is massively set together, big-boned, with a magnificent breadth of chest, apparently as strong as an ox and having a firmness of character and masterfulness. Even his clothes captivate her: the knickerbockers and gaiters, the Norfolk jacket of rough tweed, the white stock and capall redolent of the country which for his sake she was beginning to love, and all intensely masculine.Edward would not have been part of Emmas dreams, but he could have stepped out of any number of Lawrence stories: The White Peacock, Love Among the Haystacks, Sons and Lovers, The Virgin and the Gipsy, Lady Chatterleys Lover, and many others. His brethren in those works are strongly physical, unintellectual, and sometimes nearly inarticulate, but their vitality and masculine sensuality awaken the women from their repressive intellects and social conditioning. Like Sleeping Beauty, they awaken from the somnambulance of their routine lives, and like Tennysons Lady of Shalott, they turn from the mirror to look on life directly. Blood consciousness conquers the overdeveloped intelligence, and the women are freed to live sensually.If Mrs Craddock had been published twenty years after it was, it might well have been considered a parody of Lawrences belief in the regenerating power of sexuality. For all of Edwards animal sensuality, it is Bertha who is fired by passion, and she hopes that his vitality and strength will revitalize her increasingly enfeebled family line. But, rather than breathing fresh new air into Court Leys, Edward becomes more of the squirein all the banality, narrow-mindedness, and pomposity of the positionthan she could ever have imagined. And so, as Anthony Curtis observes, Bertha obeyed the wisdom of the blood

when she married beneath her in defiance of society but where did it get her?What her marriage to Edward got Bertha, in fact, was entrapment, and like so many of Maughams characters, her struggle becomes one of freeing herself from her imprisonment. Oh, when I think that Im shackled to him for the rest of my life, she tells Dr. Ramsay, I feel I could kill myself. In a temporary escape to Italy, where life is joyous, vital, and unrestrained compared to the confined and dull routine of Court Leys, Bertha is described as being like a prisoner so long immured that freedom dazes him, and he looks for his chains and cannot understand that he is free. Even back in London, she exults like a captive free from chains. Such periods of liberation can be found only away from Court Leys, however, and, when Bertha becomes resigned to her prosaic and unfulfilling life with Edward, she finds her satisfaction in small things: wildflowers, solitary swims in the sea, and literature.Bertha is nonetheless released from her imprisonment in a monotonous marriage by Edwards accidental death. When she is told that he has been killed, she has only one thought, one that horrifies her but is so important that it is italicized: She was free! She nevertheless has one more dangerous snare to avoid: the danger of being caught in an illusion for the rest of her life. As she thinks of Edward, she remembers him not as the husband she came to despise in marriage, but as the attractive young man she thought him in the beginning. To avoid being thus entrapped forever, Bertha conducts a soul-shattering purge of all reminders of the young Edward and, in a final gesture, she studies his corpse and exorcizes her recollection of him as a young man. She will leave Court Leys and its memories and return to Italy, for now she had no ties on earth, and at last, she was free.Though D. H. Lawrence and Maugham both became well-known authors, their paths crossed only once, at the home of a mutual friend in Mexico City in 1924. Following a tense lunch at which neither man was comfortable, Lawrence pronounced Maugham a narrow-gutted artist. There is no evidence that Lawrence ever read Mrs Craddock but, had he done so, he would surely have found that it confirmed his judgment of its author. The opening line of the novel states that it might be called also The Triumph of Love, but, considering that Bertha is drawn into marriage to Edward by her attraction to his physical being, it might really be called The Triumph of Sex. The comment is, of course, ironic, since the triumph is the entrapping of the woman in an unsatisfactory marriage to her masculine sex object, an entrapment from which she is eventually happily released. As the novel ends, Bertha ceases thinking about her dead husband, returns to her books, and begins reading quietly. Lawrence would have been repelled by this triumph of cerebration over passion.Mrs Craddock is nonetheless the best novel Maugham was to write until Of Human Bondage. It is one of a long line of his works in which emotion is shown to overwhelm reason and lead the characters to self-destructive behavior. Bertha, says Laurence Brander, is Maughams first experiment in psychological analysis, an experiment that is more than usually interesting because Maughams special gift has always been for creating woman characters. Her conclusion at the end that all ties were irksome, all earthly attachments unnecessaryin other words, that as a free woman she can be wholly self-contained and self-sustainingwill dismay many readers. It makes her, though, a woman looking ahead to the twentieth century rather than back to the Victorian period.Suggestions for Further ReadingCalder, Robert. Willie: The Life of W. Somerset Maugham. London: Heinemann, 1989.Curtis, Anthony. The Pattern of Maugham. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1974.Galsworthy, John. The Country House. London: William Heinemann, 1907.Heywood, C. Somerset Maughams Debt to Madame Bovary and Miss Braddons The Doctors Wife, Etudes anglaises19 (JanuaryMarch 1966): 6469.. Two Printed Texts of Somerset Maughams Mrs Craddock, English Language Notes 5 (September 1967): 3946.Hunter, Jefferson. Edwardian Fiction. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982.Kermode, Frank. The English Novel, circa 1907, in The Art of Telling: Essays on Fiction. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983.Meyers, Jeffrey. Somerset Maugham: A Life. New York: Knopf, 2004.Whitehead, John. Maugham: A Reappraisal. Totowa, N. J.: Barnes and Noble, 1978.PREFACEThis novel was written in 1900. It was thought extremely daring, and was refused by publisher after publisher, among others by William Heinemann; but it was at last read by Robertson Nicoll, a partner in the firm of Hodder and Stoughton, and he, though of opinion that it was not the sort of book his own firm should publish, thought well enough of it to urge William Heinemann to reconsider his decision. Heinemann read it himself and, on the condition that I took out passages that he found shocking, agreed to publish it. This was in 1902. It must have had something of a success, since it was reissued the following year, and again in 1908. Thirty years later it was republished. The new edition was printed from the original manuscript with the offensive parts left in, for I could not for the life of me imagine what they were, and I had not the patience to compare the manuscript with the printed copy. On the contrary, the propriety of the book seemed to me almost painful. I made, however, certain corrections.The author had been dead for many years, and I used the manuscript as I

would that of a departed friend whose book, unrevised by him, had been entrusted to me for publication. I left it as it was, with all its faults, and contented myself with minor emendations. The authors punctuation was haphazard, and I did my best to put some method into it. I replaced the dashes which he used, I fear from ignorance of a complicated art, with colons, semi-colons and commas; I omitted the rows of dots with which he sought to draw the readers attention to the elegance of a sentiment or the subtlety of an observation, and I replaced with a full stop the marks of exclamation that stood all over the page, like telegraph poles, apparently to emphasize the authors astonishment at his own acumen. I cannot imagine why he had the affectation of treating the letter H as a vowel, and wrote of an horse, an house and an home; I struck out all I could find of these otiose Ns; but if any still remain, the reader is besought to pardon an aberration of youth and the carelessness of the editor. It is not an easy matter to decide how you should treat this particular letter and, searching for guidance, I have consulted a number of grammars. So far as I can make out, whether you treat H as a vowel or a consonant depends on the stress you naturally lay on the syllable it accompanies. So, it would be absurd to tell a friend, who wanted to write still another war novel, to have an heart; but not unreasonable to suggest that, if he must write, he would be better advised to write an historical romance.A pleasant story is told about Alfred de Musset. He was sitting down one day at George Sands to wait for her, and he took up one of her novels that lay on a table. He thought it uncommonly verbose. When she came in, she found him, pencil in hand, crossing out all the unnecessary adjectives; and they say that she did not take it very well. I sympathize with his impatience and with her irritation. But in this matter I used moderation. Some of the authors favourite words have now a strangely old-fashioned air, but I saw no reason to change them, since there is nothing to show that the modern ones which I might have put in their stead will not in a few years be just as dated. An epithet has its vogue and is forgotten, and the amusing of the moment will doubtless in a little ring as false as the horrid of the eighteen nineties. But I crossed out a great many somes, certains and rathers, for the author of this book had an unhappy disinclination to make an unqualified statement. I was ruthless with the adverbs. When he used five words to say what could have been said in one, I replaced them with the one; and when it seemed to me that he had not said what he wanted to, I ventured to change what he said for what I could not but think he meant. English is a very difficult language, and the author, with whose work I was taking the liberties I have described, had never been taught it. The little he knew he had picked up here and there. No one had ever explained to him the difficulties of composition or the mysteries of style. He began to write as a child begins to walk. He took pains to study good models, but, with none to guide him, he did not always choose his models wisely, and he devoted much care to writers who now seem to most of us affected and jejune.Some months ago, a gallery in Cork Street had an exhibition of small French pictures painted early in the present century. Since I was often in Paris at that time and used to wander in and out of the shops in the Rue de la Botie or on the other side of the Seine where pictures were on view, I must have seen them, or others like them; but if I did, I would have dismissed them with a shrug of the shoulders as Salon pictures, and commonplace, for I had recently discovered Manet, Monet and Pissarro; and these little pictures of Paris, the quais, the boulevards, the shabby streets, the Champs-lyses, said nothing to me; but when, after this long lapse of time I saw them again, I found them enchanting. The fiacres, the horse-drawn buses, the victorias with their pair of spanking horses in which drove women, femmes du monde or celebrated cocottes, dressed in the height of fashion, on their way to the Bois, the queer uniforms of the little soldiers, the nounous with long satin streamers to their caps, pushing prams in the gardens of the Luxembourgone had taken it all for granted; one had no idea that life was so gay and colourful. Whether these pictures were well painted or not, and most of them showed the competence of a sound training at the Beaux Arts, was no matter; the years had given them a nostalgic charm that one had no wish to resist. They were genre. And now that for this new edition of Mrs Craddock I have re-read it, it is as a genre picture that I regard it. I smile and blush at its absurdities, but leave them because they belong to the period; and if the novel has any merit (and that the reader must decide for himself), it is because it is a picture, faithful, I believe, of life in a corner of England during the last years of the nineteenth century.Revue de presse"He is a decade ahead of D.H. Lawrence in his portrayal of a woman with a passionate sexual attraction" (Washington Post)"Maugham's best work as a novelist...ahead of its time" (New York Times)