

Robin Maugham:

An Inventory of His Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator	Maugham, Robin, 1916-1981
Title:	Robin Maugham Collection
Dates:	1932-1975
Extent:	13 boxes (5.5 linear feet)
Abstract:	The bulk of the material in this collection comprises holograph and typed versions of Maugham's early writings, non-fiction, novels, plays, screenplays, and short stories.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-02724
Language:	English.
Access	Open for research

Administrative Information

Acquisition	Purchase, 1975-1977
Processed by	Deborah Shelby, 1994
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Robin Maugham was an author of short stories, novels, non-fiction, plays, and screenplays; an officer in World War II; a barrister-at-law; and 2nd Viscount Maugham of Hartfield. His success was not without struggle. In the preface to his first autobiography, *Escape from the Shadows*, Maugham describes the three shadows of his life: his uncle William Somerset Maugham, his father Viscount Frederic Herbert Maugham, and the guilt he experienced due to the "strict upper-middle class moral convictions" that declared his homosexual desires to be perverse.

The youngest child and only son of Helen Mary and Frederic Herbert Maugham was born on May 17, 1916, as Robert Cecil Romer Maugham. His three sisters were Diana Maugham Marr-Johnson, Kate Mary Maugham Bruce, and Honor Maugham Earl. Maugham describes his childhood as lonely, with the exception of an imaginary friend, Tommy. Throughout his autobiographical works, Maugham speaks frankly about the troubles he experienced because of his attraction to men.

He spent most of his youth in boarding schools, beginning with Highfield School, Eton, and Trinity Hall, Cambridge. Both sides of his family practiced law, and Maugham was urged to follow the family tradition. His interest in law was less than enthusiastic; he found writing, painting, and music more pleasurable. He left Cambridge in 1937, signed up for the Inns of Court Regiment and became a judge's marshal. In April 1939, Maugham became the private secretary to the Director of the National Service Campaign. As part of this assignment, Maugham worked with Winston Churchill, creating a relationship that lasted until just before Churchill's death. When war was declared in September 1939, Maugham entered as a trooper in the Inns of Court Regiment.

Maugham served in World War II from 1939 to 1945, first with the 8th Army in North Africa and later with the Middle East Intelligence Centre. During a 1942 battle he was hit in the head with a shell fragment. This caused him to have blackouts, but the severity was never enough to have the shrapnel removed. However, due to this injury he was released from duty in 1945 and was unable to resume his law practice.

Maugham's short story, *The 1946 Ms*, had been published by the War Facts Press in 1943 and was his first published work. *Convoy*, a journal bridging the gap between military and civilian life during World War II, was created by and edited by Maugham for seven issues beginning in 1944. When his father died in 1958, Maugham became the 2nd Viscount Maugham of Hartfield. In 1960 he gained a seat in the House of Lords.

After his first published work in 1943, Maugham wrote novels, short stories, plays, travel books, dramatic works, a biography of his family, two autobiographies, and film scripts. His writing has been compared to that of his uncle in their use of "exotic locales," though Robin is much more frank in his writing regarding sexuality and sexual guilt, particularly in his first autobiography. Writer, editor, and journalist Peter Burton met Maugham in 1968 and helped with the revision and rewriting of several works including *Escape from the Shadows*, *The Last Encounter*, *The Barrier*, *The Dividing Line*, *Lovers in Exile*, *The Black Tent*, as well as several articles and reviews. Burton

worked as a writer and editor for *Gay News* from 1972 to 1982. During this time, he also worked with Maugham on many projects and compiled Maugham's bibliography. Burton discusses the many aspects of their relationship in *Parallel Lives*.

By 1981, Maugham's health had deteriorated. Diabetes and his abuse of alcohol, in addition to other physical problems, ended his life two months shy of his 65th birthday, on March 13, 1981.

Sources

Parallel Lives, by Peter Burton, 1985

Search for Nirvana, by Robin Maugham, 1975

Escape from the Shadows: An Autobiography of Robin Maugham, 1973

Somerset and All the Maughams, by Robin Maugham, 1966

Scope and Contents

There are two series in this collection: Correspondence, 1960-66, and Works, 1932-75. The bulk of the material is in the works series, which contains a sample of holograph and typed versions of Maugham's early writings, non-fiction, novels, plays, screenplays, and short stories. Maugham's two autobiographical works, *Escape from the Shadows* (1972) and *Search for Nirvana* (1975), are two of the most extensively represented works in the collection. There is very little personal correspondence or information beyond his writings that discuss his military career, his tenure in the House of Lords, or his writing career. There are additional Maugham materials in other HRHRC collections that do address aspects of his personal life and writing career; however, they, too, are limited.

Series Descriptions

Series I. Correspondence, 1960-1966

This series consists of nineteen letters Maugham wrote to John Davenport (possibly a critic) between 1960 and 1966. Maugham discusses his works, the works of others, reviews that Davenport wrote, and health problems both experienced. Other correspondence in the collection includes a few letters from Siridhamma Therg and Herman Linders in the Works series in the religious notes folder filed under *Search For Nirvana* (3.7). These letters have been kept with the notes because of their content. There are also a few letters to Maugham's secretary, Jeanne Francis, in the folders for *Search for Nirvana* (3.4) and *Escape from the Shadows* (1.7).

Series II. Works, 1932-1975

The works are arranged in five subseries: a small group of early writings, followed by four genre groupings of non-fiction, novels, plays, and screenplays. Within each subseries the titles are

arranged alphabetically. The arrangement of the collection as it was received has been maintained, although it is not known if this was Maugham's filing system. The Works series begins in 1932 with writings from Maugham's school days. The collection also contains a typescript of his first published short story, *The 1946 Ms* (1943), as well as both published and unpublished materials until 1975. Early drafts of Maugham's works are in bound notebooks; much of the material is heavily annotated, especially the typescripts. Some of the annotations and notes were likely written by Peter Burton, particularly those in *Escape from the Shadows*, *The Last Encounter*, *The Barrier*, and *The Black Tent*. The bulk of the materials are in the non-fiction and novels subseries.

Subseries A: Early Writings, ca. 1932-38

The early writings are all handwritten, and date roughly from 1932 to 1938. Seven essays bear tutor's comments and grades, including: "Competitions," an essay on Samuel Pepys, and three essays entitled "Sunday Questions." The final two essays do not have titles, but one is dated 8 July 1932. Other materials in this section are a story about a voyage to Vera Cruz, Mexico, titled "Journey to Mexico," written around 1938, as well as two notebooks. One notebook contains press clippings from 1938, regarding Maugham's academic achievements. "Half Term. Charleston, March 9, 1938" and fragments of the play "Together" Act II, Scene 1 (pages 25-207 are missing) are also part of this notebook. The second notebook contains nine pages of the "Morality Play," with some pencil sketches and caricatures. The play centers on a drunken undergraduate.

Subseries B: Non-Fiction, 1962-1975

The titles in this subseries include *The Joyita Mystery*, three articles about William Somerset Maugham, and Maugham's two autobiographies, *Escape from the Shadows* (1972) and *The Search For Nirvana* (1975). The preliminary notes, and handwritten and typed drafts of *Escape from the Shadows*, differ significantly from the published version. Information regarding his uncle, as well as other corrections and deletions that appear in the various drafts, were omitted in the final publication. *The Joyita Mystery* (1962) is represented by the original holograph manuscript, typed pages, and clippings concerning Maugham's research on the 70-ton vessel and the disappearance of her crew. This book was the foundation for a screenplay of the same name. There is an agency typescript of the screenplay in folder 11.9. Three articles about William Somerset Maugham were published in the *Sunday Telegraph* from January 16-30, 1966. The holograph copies of the articles reflect Robin's first impressions of his uncle, family history, Somerset's relationships with his siblings, particularly Robin's father, and reminiscences of events that Somerset shared with Robin. After publishing *Escape from the Shadows*, Maugham decided that there was enough information about his life that had not been expressed to begin working on *The Search for Nirvana*. While the first autobiography provides basic information about the chronology of his life, the second focuses more on his emotional and spiritual development. Peter Burton's assistance with *The Search For Nirvana* is identifiable at several points. Work on this volume began in 1973, as documented in the holograph outline which dates from February and March of that year. Materials from which Maugham drew in writing his second autobiography, including articles he had written in the previous decade, clippings about people who influenced his life (Noel Coward, La Marquis de St. Innocent, Somerset Maugham, Guy Burgess, and Glubb Pasha), and clippings and notes on philosophical, political, and religious subjects are filed here, as are drafts of other works Maugham was writing at the time, such as *The Link*. Correspondence with Herman Lindars (1973) and Siridhamma Therg (1973-4) is filed with the religious notes.

Subseries C: Novels, 1968-1974

The Barrier, *The Last Encounter*, *The Link*, *The Second Window*, and *The Sign* are all represented in this subseries by notes, notebooks containing holograph drafts, annotated typescripts, agency typescripts, and miscellaneous loose pages. *The Barrier, A Victorian Novel* (1973) contains five

sonnets by John Betjeman, the typescripts of which are annotated, possibly in Betjeman's hand. There are several versions of this manuscript as well as versions of the screenplay by the same name, which was produced in 1971 (see files in the Screenplays subseries). Both Maugham and Burton made annotations in the various versions of this novel. An annotated printer's copy of *The Last Encounter* (1972) is identified as the author's corrected manuscript. This story is based on the journals of General Charles George Gordon, Governor-General of Sudan, who was killed in Khartoum in 1885. Maugham, with the help of Burton, uses Gordon's last journal to show a different side of the famous general, who is unsure of his destiny and sexual emotions. Notes and drafts represent what was originally titled *The Quilt*, but was published in 1969 as *The Link*. This Victorian novel is a fictitious reconstruction of the Tichborne inheritance case of the 1850s. See also Subseries B: Non-Fiction, *Search for Nirvana* (3.1) for additional notes on *The Link*. Files for *The Second Window* (1968) contain background material, notes, nine holograph notebooks, and a printers copy. The story is based on a man in prison who has betrayed his friends, and expresses feelings of guilt for his betrayal. This novel is heavily annotated, with extensive passages deleted concerning the main character's homosexuality. Published in 1974, *The Sign* was previously titled *The Dove* and *A.D. 20*. Set in Roman-occupied Palestine, the main character is a young visionary who believes he is the Messiah. A carbon copy of the first draft and a typescript with annotations by Maugham and Burton, as well as material in the Plays subseries, represent this work. Maugham showed an early version of *The Wrong People* to his uncle, who told him not to publish the work under his own name because "they" would get him. Ignoring his uncle's advice, Maugham published this erotic homosexual thriller in 1970. This work is represented by notes, annotated typescripts, and an agency typescript in two volumes.

Subseries D: Plays, Produced from 1948-69

A.D. 20, *The Claimant*, *Home Waters*, *Nijinsky*, *The Servant*, and *Winter in Ischia*, are represented by notebooks, bound volumes containing holograph drafts, and typescripts. *A.D. 20*, written in 1969, was never produced. This two act play provided Maugham with material he used to create the published novel, *The Sign* (see also Novels subseries). First produced in 1962, the three act play *The Claimant* is represented by a holograph volume and an agency typescript. Holograph drafts of *He Must Return* and Act II of *Home Waters* are bound together. *He Must Return* was produced in 1945 at the Chanticleer Theatre Club. A collaboration with Romola Nijinsky created the three act play, *Nijinsky*, as documented by bound volumes containing holograph drafts, notebooks, and a typescript. The notebook for Act II contains notes possibly written by William Lawrence, a friend and photographer who provided photographs for *Search For Nirvana*. *The Servant* was produced in 1966 and is represented by an annotated agency typescript. This production is different from the 1958 production as is reflected by the deletions and the change in dialog. Possibly Maugham's best known work, *The Servant* is based on a London writer who had been a military officer, and his male servant who destroys people by using their weaknesses. Another three act play, *Winter in Ischia*, was produced in 1964. The bound volume containing a holograph draft of this play also contains a version of the short story, "Le Pere Auguste," which was later published in *The Black Tent and Other Stories*. There is also an agency typescript for this play.

Subseries E: Screenplays, 1954-1971

The Barrier, *The Carrier*, *The Joyita Mystery*, *Speaker's Corner*, *The Tainted Breeze*, *Treatment for a Film Story*, and *The Two Wise Virgins of Hove* are represented by original holograph and typed manuscripts with annotations. Notes, a bound volume containing a holograph draft, typescripts with annotations, and a revised filmscript document the changes in *The Barrier*, which had several working titles, including "Love in Kashmir," "The Weathercock," and "The Tainted Breeze." Notes for *Escape from the Shadows* also appear in folder 11.1. *The Carrier* is a screenplay Maugham adapted from the stage play by Philip King, titled "How Are You, Johnnie?" *The Speaker's Corner* is

a screenplay based on three stories by Maugham, including "Broken Cellophane," "The Prodigal Son," and "The Man Who Could Hypnotize Racehorses." Maugham worked with Rodney Ackland on the adaptation. There are three copies of *The Tainted Breeze*, which is a film outline that developed into *The Barrier. Treatment for a Film Story*, (provisionally titled "Bangles"), was a first draft of what eventually became the novel, *The Green Shade*. Broadcast by Independent Television in 1960, *The Two Wise Virgins of Hove* is represented by an agency typescript.

Subseries F: Short Stories, 1943-1974

Holograph drafts, typescripts, and agency typescripts represent *The 1946 MS*, *The Guide*, *The Last Gauguin*, *Le Pere Auguste*, *Testament: Cairo 1898*, and *The Black Tent and Other Stories*. There are carbon copy typescripts of Maugham's first published short story, *The 1946 MS*, as well as *Le Pere Auguste* and *The Guide*. Revisions on the typescript for *The Guide* are likely in Burton's hand. *Testament: Cairo 1898* was originally part of Maugham's novel *The Last Encounter*, however, the publisher removed this section because it was thought there was too much emphasis on the main character's homosexuality. Maugham gave credit to Burton for suggesting it be collected with other stories to produce *The Black Tent and Other Stories*. Burton wrote the introduction and edited this volume of short stories and his annotations appear throughout both copies of the typescripts.

Related Material

Other collections at the HRHRC containing Maugham materials include the Rupert Croft-Cook, Charles Henri Ford, Gerald Hamilton, John Lehmann, William Somerset Maugham, and Derek Patmore collections.

Index Terms

Correspondents

Burton, Peter
Davenport, John, 1904-1987
Therg, Siridhamma
Linders, Herman

Subjects

Homosexuality--Personal narratives
Homosexuals--Fiction
Gay men--England--Biography
Gay men--Fiction
Gay men in literature

Series I. Correspondence, 1960-1966

Davenport, John, 1960-1966

box 1 folder 1

Series II. Works, 1932-1975

Subseries A: Early Writings, ca. 1932-38

Essays, 1932, nd	box 1 folder 2
Journey to Mexico, ca. 1938	folder 3
Notebook with clippings, 1938	folder 4
Notebook: Morality Play, nd	folder 5

Subseries B: Non-Fiction, 1962-1975

Escape from the Shadows (1972)

Preliminary notes	box 1 folder 6
Additional material	folder 7
Holograph section 1	folder 8
Rough typescript, bound volume 1	folder 9
Rough typescript, bound volume 2	box 2 folder 1
List of corrections	folder 2
Corrected bound volumes 1 and 2	folder 3-4

The Joyita Mystery (1962)

Original manuscript	box 2 folder 5-6
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Maugham, William Somerset, three holograph articles about Somerset, published in the <i>Sunday Telegraph</i> , 1966	folder 7
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The Search for Nirvana (1975)

Outline, holograph bound volume	box 2 folder 8
Books 1 and 2, holograph (notes for <i>The Link</i>)	box 3 folder 1

Bound notebooks, holograph (dictated 1974) also contains "Ahmed Story" in #2	folder 2-3
Clippings of Maugham articles, 1965-1973	folder 4
Notes	
Philosophical	box 3 folder 5
Political clippings, 1973-1974	folder 6
Religious	folder 7
Stories in Nirvana, bound notebook	folder 8
Typescript with annotations	folder 9
Subseries C: Novels, 1968-1974	
<i>The Barrier, A Victorian Novel</i> (1973)	
Rough notes for a novel, "The Kashmir Story"	box 3 folder 10
Bound notebook, pages 1-21	box 4 folder 1
Typescripts with annotations, 2 copies	folder 2-5
Sonnets by John Betjeman	folder 6
Author and publisher's copy	folder 7-8
Miscellaneous pages	folder 9
<i>The Last Encounter</i> , printer's copy (1972)	box 5 folder 1
<i>The Link</i> (1969)	
Notes	box 5 folder 2
Parts 1-4, bound notebooks	folder 3-6
<i>The Second Window</i> (1968)	

Background material, [1966]	box 5 folder 7
Notes	folder 8
Bound notebooks 1 and 4	folder 9
Bound notebooks 2 through 9	box 6 folder 1-7
Printer's copy	box 7 folder 1-4
<i>The Sign</i> , previously titled "A.D. 20" and "The Dove"(1974)	
1st carbon copy	box 7 folder 5-6
Typescript with annotations	folder 7-8
Agency typescript	box 8 folder 1
<i>The Wrong People</i> (1970)	
Notes	box 8 folder 2
Typescript with annotations	folder 3-4
Agency typescript, volumes 1 & 2	folder 5-6
Subseries D: Plays, Produced from 1948-69	
<i>A.D. 20</i> (produced in 1969)	
Bound notebook	box 9 folder 1
Typescript	folder 2
<i>The Claimant</i> (produced in 1962)	
Bound notebook	box 9 folder 3
Typescript	folder 4
<i>Home Waters</i> , Act III, and "He Must Return" bound notebook	folder 5
<i>Nijinsky</i>	
Act II, bound notebook [1973]	box 9 folder 6

Act III, bound notebook **folder 7**

Notebook 1 **folder 8**

Notebooks 2-3 **box 10 folder 1-2**

Typescript **folder 3**

The Servant (produced in 1966) typescript **folder 4**

Winter in Ischia (produced in 1964)

Bound notebook **box 10 folder 5**

Typescript **folder 6**

Subseries E: Screenplays, 1954-1971

The Barrier (1970-71)

Notes **box 10 folder 7**

Original manuscript, bound notebook (notes for *Escape from the Shadows*) **box 11 folder 1**

Original typescript **folder 2**

Typescript with annotations, 3 copies **folder 3-5**

Revised filmscript **folder 6**

The Carrier, revised script, 1969 **folder 7**

The Joyita Mystery, agency typescript, 1962 **folder 8**

Speakers' Corner, ca. 1954

Holograph notes **box 12 folder 1**

The Hypnotist, typescript, screenplay by Rodney Ackland, nd **folder 2**

Agency typescript **folder 3**

<i>The Tainted Breeze</i> , a film outline, 3 copies, nd	folder 4
<i>Treatment for a Film Story</i> , provisional title "Bangles,"nd	folder 5
<i>The Two Wise Virgins of Hove</i> , teleplay produced in 1960	folder 6
Subseries F: Short Stories, 1943-1974	
<i>The 1946 MS</i>	box 12 folder 7
<i>The Guide</i> , typescript, 1974	folder 8
<i>The Last Gauguin</i> , holograph draft	folder 9
<i>Le Pere Auguste</i> , typescript, 1974	folder 10
<i>Testament: Cairo 1898</i> , typescript, 1974	folder 11
<i>The Black Tent and Other Stories</i>	
Introduction by Peter Burton	box 12 folder 12
Typescript p. 1-250	folder 13-14
Typescript p. 251-311	box 13 folder 1
Agent's typescript, volume 1 & 2	folder 2-3