



Somerset Maugham: A Life

Jeffrey Meyers

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An instinctive and magnificent storyteller, Somerset Maugham was one of the most popular and successful writers of his time. He published seventy-eight books -- including the undisputed classics **Of Human Bondage** and **The Razor's Edge** -- which sold over 40 million copies in his lifetime.

Born in Paris to sophisticated parents, Willie Maugham was orphaned at the age of ten and brought up in a small English coastal town by narrow-minded relatives. He was trained as a doctor, but never practiced medicine. His novel **Ashenden**, based on his own espionage for Britain in World War I, influenced writers from Eric Ambler to John le Carré. After a failed affair with an actress, he married another man's mistress, but reserved his greatest love for a man who shared his life for nearly thirty years. He traveled the world and spoke several languages. Despite a debilitating stutter, and an acerbic and formal manner, he entertained literary celebrities and royalty at his villa in the south of France. He made a fortune from his writing--the short story "Rain" alone earned him a million dollars--yet true critical recognition, and the esteem of his literary peers, eluded him. The life of Somerset Maugham, as told by acclaimed biographer Jeffrey Meyers, is an intriguing, glamorous, complex, and extraordinary account of one of the twentieth century's most enduring writers.

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