palgrave pivot

ANDRÉ MAUROIS (1885–1967)

Fortunes and Misfortunes of a Moderate

Lionel Gossman

André Maurois (1885–1967)

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0001

Other Palgrave Pivot titles

Matthew Watson: **Uneconomic Economics and the Crisis of the Model World**

Michael Gray: **Contemporary Debates in Holocaust Education**

Teresa A. Fisher: **Post-Show Discussions in New Play Development**

Judith Baxter: **Double-Voicing at Work: Power, Gender and Linguistic Expertise**

Majid Yar: **Crime, Deviance and Doping: Fallen Sports Stars, Autobiography and the Management of Stigma**

Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Jenny Daggers: **Reimagining with Christian Doctrines: Responding to Global Gender Injustices**

L. H. Whelchel, Jr.: **Sherman's March and the Emergence of the Independent Black Church Movement: From Atlanta to the Sea to Emancipation**

G. Douglas Atkins: **Swift, Joyce, and the Flight from Home: Quests of Transcendence and the Sin of Separation**

David Beer: **Punk Sociology**

Owen Anderson: **Reason and Faith in the Theology of Charles Hodge: American Common Sense Realism**

Jenny Ruth Ritchie and Mere Skerrett: **Early Childhood Education in Aotearoa New Zealand: History, Pedagogy, and Liberation**

Pasquale Ferrara: **Global Religions and International Relations: A Diplomatic Perspective**

François Bouchetoux: **Writing Anthropology: A Call for Uninhibited Methods**

Robin M. Lauermann: **Constituent Perceptions of Political Representation: How Citizens Evaluate Their Representatives**

Erik Eriksen: **The Normativity of the European Union**

Jeffery Burds: **Holocaust in Rovno: A Massacre in Ukraine, November 1941**

Timothy Messer-Kruse: **Tycoons, Scorchers, and Outlaws: The Class War That Shaped American Auto Racing**

Ofelia García and Li Wei: **Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education**

Øyvind Eggen and Kjell Roland: **Western Aid at a Crossroads: The End of Paternalism**

Roberto Roccu: **The Political Economy of the Egyptian Revolution: Mubarak, Economic Reforms and Failed Hegemony**

Stephanie Stone Horton: **Affective Disorder and the Writing Life: The Melancholic Muse**

Barry Stocker: **Kierkegaard on Politics**

Michael J. Osborne: **Multiple Interest Rate Analysis: Theory and Applications**

Lauri Rapeli: **The Conception of Citizen Knowledge in Democratic Theory**

Michele Acuto and Simon Curtis: **Reassembling International Theory: Assemblage Thinking and International Relations**

Stephan Klingebiel: **Development Cooperation: Challenges of the New Aid Architecture**

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0001

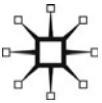
palgrave pivot

André Maurois (1885–1967): Fortunes and Misfortunes of a Moderate

Lionel Gossman

palgrave
macmillan

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0001



ANDRÉ MAUROIS (1885–1967)
Copyright © Lionel Gossman, 2014.
Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2014 978-1-137-40269-1

All rights reserved.

First published in 2014 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN®
in the United States—a division of St. Martin's Press LLC,
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Where this book is distributed in the UK, Europe and the rest of the world, this is by Palgrave Macmillan, a division of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and other countries.

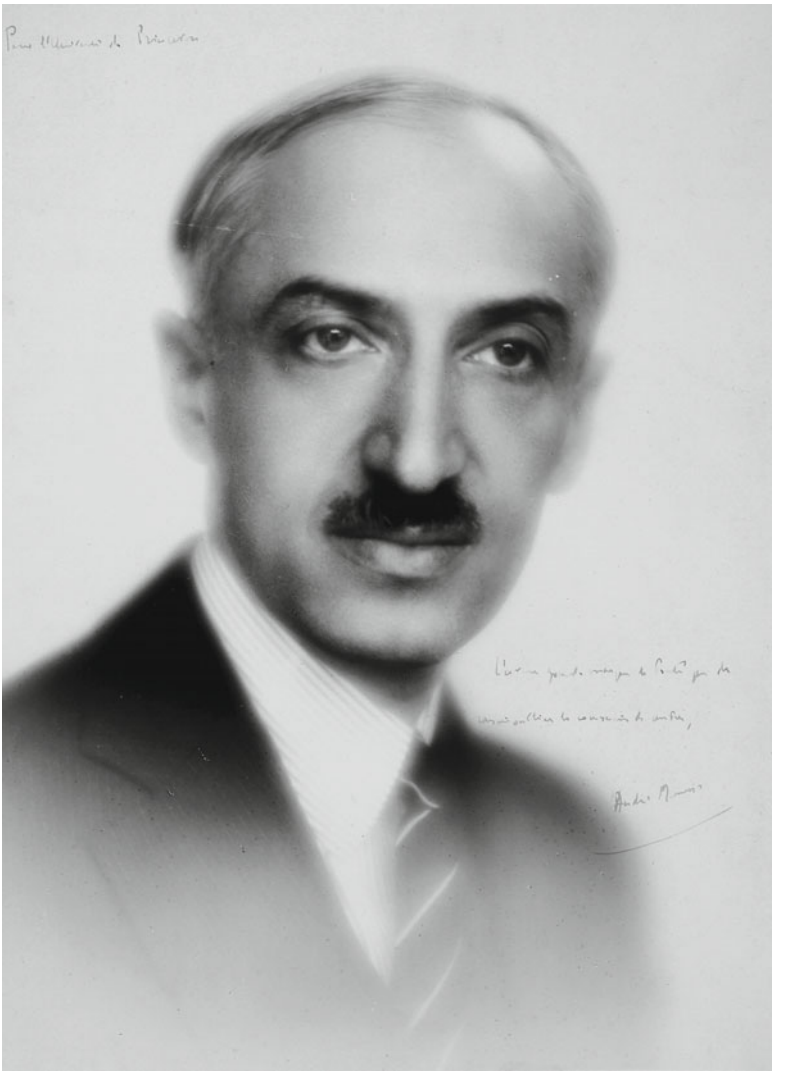
ISBN 978-1-349-48678-6 ISBN 978-1-137-40270-7 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/9781137402707

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available from the Library of Congress.

A catalogue record of the book is available from the British Library.

First edition: 2014

www.palgrave.com/pivot



Signed photograph of André Maurois presented by the writer to Princeton University, c.1931. Princeton University Archives. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections. Princeton University Library.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0001

For Eva

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0001

Contents

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0001

List of Illustrations

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0002

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0002

Acknowledgments

I am indebted to Professor Suzanne Nash, my colleague in the Department of Romance Languages at Princeton for almost forty years, and to Pierre-Alain Tilliette, scholar, novelist, and Conservateur en chef of the Bibliothèque de l'Hôtel de Ville de Paris, to whom she introduced me, for their interest in this short study of Maurois, their encouragement, and their willingness to read the manuscript and offer me their comments and suggestions. I am also grateful for their support to Carol Rigolot, with whom I collaborated on the translation and publication in the *Princeton University Library Chronicle* of a brief narrative by Maurois about the French literature preceptorial he taught at Princeton in 1930–1931; to Gretchen Oberfranc, the wise editor of that journal; to Ben Primer, Associate University Librarian for Rare Books and Special Collections at Princeton, who immediately responded to my request for permission to illustrate the book with images in the Princeton University collections; to Don Skemer, Curator of Manuscripts at Princeton University Library for making me a scan of a photograph in the Sylvia Beach Papers; and to my patient editors at Palgrave Macmillan in New York, Brigitte Shull and Ryan Jenkins.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0003

I An International Reputation

Abstract: *André Maurois is the name adopted by Émile Salomon Wilhelm Herzog, the scion of a Jewish family of textile manufacturers in Alsace who moved their factory to Elbeuf in Normandy after the Prussians annexed Alsace in 1871. Once an international celebrity as a writer, lecturer, and public persona, a respected friend of the leading literary and political figures in both his native France and England, he is little known today. The aim of the study is to explore the grounds both of his renown in his own time and of his fall from favour in ours.*

Gossman, Lionel. *André Maurois (1885–1967): Fortunes and Misfortunes of a Moderate*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0004.

André Maurois is not a name many people today, including students majoring in French literature at our colleges and universities, would recognize. Even younger French faculty members are unlikely to have more than a vague idea who he was and those of us who are older have largely forgotten him. My own re-encountering of him was accidental. As I was clearing out books from my library I came upon a copy of his 1927 biography of Disraeli in the Penguin paperback series (Penguin no. 110, 1937) in which I had inscribed my name and the date 1944. I still had a memory of having read the book with pleasure as a fifteen-year-old and decided to reread it. The skilful conduct of the narrative and the elegance, clarity, and wit of the writing remained impressive. A check on studies of Disraeli published in the last twenty to thirty years revealed, however, that this once widely read and admired biography of the British statesman now figures very rarely either in the bibliographies of these more recent works or among the books suggested "for further reading."[1] In general, it is probably fair to say that most twenty-first century readers who happen to have some knowledge of Maurois' work would consider it polished and refined, but of limited interest, either as literature or as history. As early as 1974, only seven years after Maurois' death, a contemporary and one-time friend noted in his diary, not without malice: "Poor Maurois has not survived; his celebrity has collapsed like a soufflé."[2]

During the first half of the twentieth century, in contrast, André Maurois was regarded as one of the leading writers of France.[3] He enjoyed a worldwide reputation and his books were translated into many languages—German, Swedish, Danish, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Romanian, Czech, Polish, Russian, Finnish, Turkish, Hebrew, and Japanese, as well as English. In Britain, the United States, and Germany, especially, he was seen as a founder, along with Lytton Strachey in England, Emil Ludwig in Germany, and Stefan Zweig in Austria, of what was known as "the new biography."[4] He was regularly invited to the annual August "décades" at the Abbaye de Pontigny, where, in the interwar period, the philosopher Paul Desjardins assembled a European literary and intellectual élite—Raymond Aron, Charles Du Bos, André Gide, Bernard Groethuysen, Paul Langevin, André Malraux, François Mauriac, Jean-Paul Sartre, Paul Valéry, Roger Fry, Edmund Gosse, Lytton Strachey, H.G. Wells, Edith Wharton, Hendrik de Man, Ernst-Robert Curtius, and Heinrich Mann, among many of similar caliber—for three sessions of informal discussion, each lasting ten days, and each devoted to a pre-arranged topic in literature, philosophy, and politics.[5]

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0004

In the mid-1920s he was an habitué, together with Valéry and the Nobel Prize-winning physicist Louis de Broglie, of the salon of the painter, poet, mathematician, and feminist Edmée, Duchesse de La Rochefoucauld, and in the early 1930s he was president of the French section of the *Fédération Internationale des Unions Intellectuelles*, an association founded after World War I as *Europäisches Kulturbund* by the Catholic Austrian aristocrat Karl Anton von Rohan with the aim, despite the politically conservative orientation of its founder (by the late 1930s Rohan had joined the Austrian Nazi party), of bringing together writers, artists, and thinkers from all the European nations in support of peace and amicable exchange. Among the participants in the annual meetings of the Federation were Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Thomas Mann, Max Beckmann, Gilbert Murray, Le Corbusier, and Valéry. Maurois also served on the jury of several literary prizes, such as the Prix Albert 1er, where his fellow-judges were Claudel, Colette, Duhamel, Giraudoux, Mauriac, and Valéry.

Maurois enjoyed the personal friendship as well as the esteem of the most distinguished French literary figures of the age: his teacher at the Lycée in Rouen and lifelong mentor and friend Émile Chartier (known as "Alain"), Jean Cocteau, Charles Du Bos, Roger Martin du Gard, Georges Duhamel, André Gide, Jean Giraudoux, Edmond Jaloux, François Mauriac, Jules Romains, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, Paul Valéry.[6] He was considered such a "hot ticket" in the 1920s that the publisher Gaston Gallimard, seconded by his authors—Gide, Jean Paulhan and Jean Schlumberger—made repeated efforts to woo him away from rival publisher Bernard Grasset, with whom he had published his first major success, *Les Silences du Colonel Bramble,* in 1918.[7] In 1932 the philosopher Henri Bergson asked to meet him. "Among the writers of your generation," Bergson told him, "you are one of those I read with great pleasure."[8] His then friend and fellow-writer Paul Morand saw him as the embodiment of what was best in French culture and as a model and teacher of the country's youth:

> In the silence created by the expulsion, destruction, or silencing of passions, an intelligence flourishes that is expandable and courageous to an extreme, free of all prejudice, untouched by any parti pris, lucid enough to have an understanding of everything, indulgent enough to forgive without having to forget—one of the most truly objective and just intelligences of our age. In these troubled times, in which mutually hostile camps exchange identical insults [...], Maurois remains the perfect model of a fair mind and an impartial pen.[...] That is why I see in him the teacher of a generation

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0004

> of young bourgeois. He shows them how to understand, love and defend whatever deserves to be retained of an exquisitely civilised culture.[9]

Maurois' reputation was such that his *Oeuvres Complètes*, in sixteen volumes of about 500 pages each, were published by Arthème Fayard, one of the leading Paris publishing houses, in 1950–1956, a full decade before his death and while he was still producing new work each year. Versions of his "complete works" were also published in Spanish and Japanese translation.[10] In 1953 the publishing house of Éditions Universitaires brought out a critical study of him by Michel Droit, the novelist and, later, author of a five-volume biography of de Gaulle (1972), in its series of "Twentieth Century Classics" ["Classiques du XXème siècle"]. The other writers who were the subjects of books in this series in the same year were Paul Claudel, François Mauriac, Charles Péguy, and Jean-Paul Sartre. As the author of an obituary in several US newspapers put it in October 1967, Maurois "formed part of a French intellectual élite whose erudition finds few equals elsewhere in the world. In an increasingly materialist society, such genius as was possessed by André Maurois achieves value beyond estimate. Each [of his books] was characterized by the superlative in style, form and grace. He was a giant among men of letters."[11] With the restrained realism characteristic of all his writing, Maurois himself took the measure of his achievement not long before his death in 1967: "At eighty I found myself not, as Disraeli said, 'at the top of the greasy pole,' but at an honourable height, far enough up not to have either bitterness or complexes."[12]

At a time when contacts between French and English writers and artists were extremely close, far closer than they are today,[13] Maurois was as well-known in Britain as in France. In Paul Morand's words he was "la véritable expression littéraire de l'Entente Cordiale" ["the genuine expression in literature of the 'Entente Cordiale']. Among his English friends and acquaintances he could count Maurice Baring, Arnold Bennett, E.M. Forster, Harold Nicolson, as well as Nicolson's friends Raymond Mortimer, the literary editor of *The New Statesman*, and Desmond MacCarthy, to whose literary magazine *Life and Letters* (1928–1935), he was a contributor, and Virginia Woolf, whose novel *Mrs. Dalloway* he encouraged the Paris publisher Stock to put out in a French translation—not to mention Noel Coward, with whom he later worked, in 1939, on allied propaganda directed toward Germany.[14] He had long been an admirer, like many French readers of his generation, of Rudyard Kipling whom he regarded as "one of the greatest writers of

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0004

all times"—"les maniérismes kiplingiens," he himself acknowledged, are easily recognizable in his early short fiction[15]—and after the two met at a dinner party given by the renowned London hostess Sybil Colefax in May 1928, Kipling, a Francophile and strong supporter of the *Entente Cordiale*, urged him to pursue work on a projected biography of Edward VII, the most Francophile of British monarchs and a force behind the *Entente*.[16] Later that summer Kipling invited Maurois and his wife to visit him at Bateman's, the "lovely old house of a fifteenth-century iron-master" that he had fallen in love with and purchased in 1902.[17] Maurois, on his side, translated the celebrated poem "If," the lesson of which coincided with his own ideal of a good human life, contributed the preface to the first French translation (by Antoinette Soulas) of Kipling's poems (Paris: Denoël et Steele, 1935), and wrote several articles on Kipling, the last in the *Figaro Littéraire* (October 28, 1965) just two years before his own death. He also wrote prefaces to the French translations of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (Paris: Stock, 1929), Aldous Huxley's *Point Counterpoint* (Paris: Plon, 1930), and Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* (Paris: Gallimard, 1933). The year 1935 saw the publication of *Magiciens et logiciens* (Engl. trans. *Prophets and Poets,* 1935), a collection of essays on Kipling, H.G. Wells, G.K. Chesterton, Joseph Conrad, Lytton Strachey, George Bernard Shaw, Katherine Mansfield, and D.H. Lawrence—later updated, as *Points of View: From Kipling to Graham Greene* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1968), to include essays on Virginia Woolf and Graham Greene. Maurois' renown in Britain was such that in 1936 he was asked to speak immediately after George Bernard Shaw at a grand dinner in London in celebration of the 75th birthday of H.G. Wells.[18]

Not surprisingly, there were many invitations to give talks not only in France, but in other European countries and especially in the English-speaking world—from the Clark Lectures in 1928 at Trinity College, Cambridge, where Maurois' lecture series on "Aspects of Biography," delivered in English (in which he was fluent) and published in the following year by Cambridge University Press, followed immediately upon E.M. Forster's celebrated series on "Aspects of the Novel," to the Lowell Lectures in Boston in 1940, which were originally to have been on a literary topic but, in view of the international situation at the time and at the request of retired Harvard President Lawrence Lowell himself, were dedicated instead to Maurois' "memories of the war" and, as Maurois later put it, to "rendering justice to France" in the hour of her defeat and humiliation.[19] In the late 1920s, the 1930s, and the 1940s he gave talks

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0004

on many US college campuses. His *Edward VII and His Times* (1933) was based on lectures to audiences in France under the auspices of the *Société des Conférences*. The biographies of Proust (1949), George Sand (1951), and Victor Hugo (1954) also owe their existence to lecture series that he was prevailed upon to give after World War II by "l'insatiable et amical" critic and novelist Francis Ambrière, who was then editor of *Les Annales—Conferencia*, a popular illustrated monthly devoted to literature, theatre, and cinema.[20] Shortly before his death, he was invited to deliver the George P. Pegram Lectures at Brookhaven National Laboratory. Though he died just before his scheduled departure for the United States, he had prepared the text of his lectures—on "The illusions of the senses and the sentiments," "The illusions of science," and "Wilful illusions or the fine arts"—and they were presented to their intended audience of research scientists by the well-known Columbia University Professor Jacques Barzun and published posthumously in 1968, under the title *Illusions*, by Columbia University Press in English and by Hachette in French. To cap these indicators of general esteem, Maurois was the recipient of honorary degrees from Edinburgh (1928), Princeton (1933), St. Andrews (1934), and Oxford (1934). In 1938 he was elected to the *Académie française* and soon after the outbreak of war in 1939 it was said that Cambridge was planning to invite him to join its faculty.[21]

While it is true that many of Maurois' once-highly regarded contemporaries, including Nobel prizewinners Romain Rolland (1915) and Roger Martin du Gard (1937), have not "rounded the cape of 50 posthumous years any better than André Maurois," as one critic has put it,[22] Maurois' fall from fame is especially striking in light of his immense international popularity. My aim in the following pages is to consider to what extent a characteristic feature of Maurois' relations with others, of his political positions, and of his very writing style—moderation and restraint, willingness to listen to other points of view, hesitation to pronounce judgment, avoidance of provocation, respect for customs and values established by centuries of civilization—may have contributed both to the popularity he enjoyed in his own time and to his subsequent drastic fall from favor. Intelligent and insightful as he was, he was himself aware that there were limits beyond which he was unwilling or unable to advance, aspects of human existence he was not comfortable exploring, primitive "sentiments and desires" that civilization has suppressed but that "some tragic happening, suddenly shattering the social framework" might "revive within us." In a 1928 diary entry about his enormously

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0004

successful novel *Climats*, he wrote: "The characters in *Climats* are too civilized. My most dangerous weakness? Politeness."[23]

Notes

The sometimes lengthy endnotes that follow have two purposes in addition to the usual one of indicating the source of an assertion in the text or offering a translation (or the original) of a passage quoted in the text. One is to provide a bibliographical guide to readers who might wish to pursue a topic touched on in the text (e.g. Maurois' place in the history of biography, the Pontigny *Décades*, Anglo-French literary relations in the early twentieth century, the arguments put forward in defence of the Vichy regime that might help to explain Maurois' position). The other is to expand somewhat on the text itself, which I have tried to keep short and uncluttered.

1 A spot check of seven biographies of Cecil Rhodes published after Maurois' admittedly far less widely read study of the statesman-adventurer (1953) revealed similarly that Maurois' work, listed in two out of three biographies published fairly close to his, is completely passed over in all biographies published after 1970.

2 Paul Morand, *Journal inutile*, ed. Laurent and Véronique Boyer (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), vol. 2 (1973–1976), p. 283 (30 June 1974). In recent dictionaries of French literature published in France, Maurois hardly figures. The four-volume *Dictionnaire des littératures de langue française* of J.-P. de Beaumarchais, Danile Couty and Alain Rey (Paris: Bordas, 1987) devotes over eight pages to François Mauriac and barely a third of a page to Maurois. The entry on Mauriac in the *Dictionnaire de la littérature française et francophone* edited by Pascal Mougin (Paris: Larousse, 2012) runs to over three columns while Maurois is presented in barely a third of a single column. In *Le Robert des Grands Écrivains de langue française*, ed. Philippe Hamon and Denis Roger-Vasselin (Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert, 2012), there are substantial articles of seven to thirteen pages on Maurois' close friends André Gide, Julien Green, Mauriac, Jules Romains, and Antoine de Saint-Exupéry; Céline and Drieu la Rochelle are also treated generously (thirteen and eight pages respectively); Maurois, in contrast, is not present at all.

3 As late as 1960, the critic Gaëton Picon could write that "if one were to ask the general public in France and in foreign countries who our major French writers are, there would be agreement on a number of names: Georges Duhamel, François Mauriac, Jules Romains, Roger Martin du Gard, Colette, Francis Carco, André Maurois" (*Panorama de la nouvelle littérature française*

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0004

[Paris: Gallimard, 1960], p. 30) Of these, Maurois was probably the greatest commercial success internationally.

4 He is regularly mentioned in the reflections on biography of contemporaries, such as Virginia Woolf (see, for instance, Woolf's "The New Biography," originally published in *New York Herald Tribune*, 30 October 1927, reprinted in *Granite and Rainbow* [London: Hogarth Press, 1958], pp. 149–155) and he continues to this day to figure prominently in scholarly studies of the genre of biography: the now classic work by the Dutch scholar Jan Romein, *Die Biographie: Einführung in ihre Geschichte und ihre Problematik* (Bern: A. Francke, 1948; orig. Dutch, 1946); Leon Edel, *Literary Biography* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1957); John A. Garraty, *The Nature of Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1957), Helmut Scheuer, *Biographie: Studien zur Funktion und zum Wandel einer literarischen Gattung vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1979); Daniel Madelénat, *La Biographie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1984); David Novarr, *The Lines of Life: Theories of Biography 1880–1970* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1986); Stephen B. Oates, ed., *Biography as High Adventure: Life-Writers Speak on Their Art* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986); Ulick O'Connor, *Biographers and the Art of Biography* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1991); Christoph Gradmann, *Historische Bellestristik: Populäre historische Biographien in der Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt/New York: Campus, 1993); François Dosse, *Le Pari biographique* (Paris: Éditions de la Découverte, 2005); Christian von Zimmermann, *Biographische Anthropologie* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006). In the recent *Theorie der Biographie: Grundlagentexte und Kommentar*, ed. B. Fetz and W. Hemecker (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2011), a compendium of basic writings on biography from Samuel Johnson by way of Carlyle, Dilthey, Strachey, Woolf, Ludwig, and others to Sartre and Foucault, Maurois' article "Die Biographie als Kunstwerk"—a German translation of chapter 2 of his *Aspects of Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929) that originally appeared in the *Neue Rundschau*, 40/1 (1929), pp. 232–248—is reprinted on pp. 83–97.

5 On the Pontigny *Décades*—begun in 1911, interrupted by World War I, resumed in 1922, continued during World War II with the help of French émigrés in the US at Mount Holyoke College, and then revived, after the war, as the celebrated *Colloques de Cerisy*—see the richly documented *Paul Desjardins et les Décades de Pontigny. Études, témoignages et documents inédits,* which was edited by Desjardins' daughter, Anne Heurgon-Desjardins and for which André Maurois wrote a preface (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964). See also the fascinating study of François Chaubet, *Paul Desjardins et les Décades de Pontigny* (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2000); *De Pontigny à Cerisy. Un siècle de rencontres intellectuelles*, ed. Claire Paulhan (Exhibition cat., 2002); *De Pontigny à Cerisy.*

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0004

Des lieux pour "penser ensemble", ed. Sylvain Allemand, Edith Heurgon, Claire Paulhan (Paris: Hermann, 2011 [Colloque de Cerisy, 24–31 August 2010]); *Artists, Intellectuals, and World War II: The Pontigny Encounters at Mount Holyoke College 1942–1944*, ed. Christopher Benfey and Karen Remmler (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006). Maurois was a regular participant from the very first of the post-war "décades" in 1922, when he was still a young writer of promise; see his recollection of the 1922 gathering in his affectionate portrait of Charles Du Bos (*Destins exemplaires* in *Oeuvres Complètes*, vol. 10 [Paris: Bibliothèque Bernard Grasset chez Arthème Fayard, 1952], p. 360). By 1928 he was on the Board of Directors of the Société de Pontigny (*Paul Desjardins et les Décades de Pontigny* [PUF, 1964], p. 14). "There was talk for several years," according to Maurois, "of Desjardins' being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize" for his efforts to bring all parties and all nations together in amicable exchange (Maurois in *In Memoriam Paul Desjardins (1859–1940)* [Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1949], p. 57). The philosopher Henri Bergson did, in fact, prepare a letter to the Nobel Peace Prize selection committee, proposing Desjardins for the prize. The text of this letter, dated 9 January 1934, is reproduced in *Paul Desjardins et les Décades de Pontigny* (P.U.F., 1964), pp. 387–388.

6 In his Memoirs (*Memoirs 1885–1967*, trans. Denver Lindley [London: The Bodley Head, 1970]) and especially in *Choses nues. Chroniques* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963)—consisting of notes, conversations, scenes, and portraits written between 1927 and 1939 with a view to a political novel that was never written—Maurois describes numerous lunches, dinners, and conversations with literary friends and associates. (The title was doubtless intended to evoke Hugo's *Choses vues* and Valéry's *Choses tues* of 1930.) Maurois in turn figures frequently in the correspondences and journals of these literary friends. (See, for instance, Michel Jarrety, *Paul Valéry* [Paris: Fayard, 2008], pp. 683, 1033 *et passim*.) In exile in the United States during World War II, Maurois paid tribute to a number of these friends by lecturing on their work and publishing a two-volume collection of essays, based on his lectures, devoted to Bergson, Claudel, Duhamel, Martin du Gard, Gide, Jacques de Lacretelle, Mauriac, Péguy, Proust, Jules Romains, Saint-Exupéry, and Valéry (*Études littéraires* [New York: Éditions de la Maison Française, n.d.–*c.*1941]). As explained in a foreword, the collection also had a patriotic aim: to "help our American friends to listen with better understanding to voices from France," and to demonstrate that, though France "seems to be no more now than a body emprisoned in its misfortunes, sublime songs still rise from that noble form, now in chains." After the War, in his late seventies, Maurois published more collections of essays on the work of friends and associates, some old, some new: *De Proust à Camus* (Paris: Librairie académique Perrin, 1963; Eng. trans. 1966) and *De Gide à Sartre* (Librairie académique Perrin, 1965).

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0004

7 Alban Cerisier, *Une histoire de La NRF* (Paris: Gallimard, 2009), pp. 347–348.

8 *Choses nues*, pp. 59–60. Shortly afterwards (7 November 1933) Bergson wrote in a personal letter to Maurois: "I must tell you the pleasure and interest with which I have just read *Édouard VII et son temps*. It is a real tour de force to have made such an instructive book so engaging. How do you manage to bestow upon a very exact history the charm of a novel?" (Quoted by Jack Kolbert in his richly documented *The Worlds of André Maurois* [Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1985] p. 104.)

9 "Dans le silence des passions expulsées, tuées ou tues, s'épanouit une intelligence extensible et courageuse à l'extrême, libre de toute prévention, nette de tout parti pris, assez lucide pour tout comprendre, assez indulgente pour pardonner sans avoir besoin pour cela d'oublier, une des intelligences les plus vraiment objectives et justes de notre temps; en ce temps trouble où les camps ennemis se renvoient des injures identiques et où quiconque n'est pas 'militant' est traité de 'factieux' et réciproquement, Maurois reste le type accompli d'un esprit de bonne foi et d'une plume impartiale. [. . .] Je vois en lui le maître d'une génération de jeunes bourgeois à qui il enseigne à comprendre, aimer et défendre tout ce qui doit rester d'une civilisation exquise." (Paul Morand, "André Maurois," in *L'heure qu'il est* [Paris: Grasset, 1938; reprint in Paul Morand, *Chroniques 1931–1954*, ed. Jean-François Fogel [Paris: Grasset, 2001], pp. 263–270, on p. 264)

10 According to his own testimony, *Memoirs 1885–1967*, p. 380.

11 *Record American* (Boston), 12 October 1967; *News American* (Baltimore), 13 October 1967; *Herald Examiner* (Los Angeles), 15 October 1967.

12 *Memoirs 1885–1967*, p. 417.

13 See, for example, the *Letters of Arnold Bennett*, ed. James Hepburn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), the *Journals of Arnold Bennett 1921–1928*, ed. Norman Flower (London: Cassell, 1933), the *Correspondance André Gide—Arnold Bennett: vingt ans d'amitié littéraire*, ed. Lorette Brugmans (Geneva: Droz, 1964). On the relations of the Bloomsbury Circle and France, see Mary Ann Caws and Sarah Bird Wright, *Bloomsbury and France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). The topic of the "décade" at Pontigny for 1939, which Maurois was supposed to organize, according to Gide, and which had the backing of the *Times Literary Supplement*, was "Relations intellectuelles, morales, et spirituelles entre l'Angleterre et la France." The British participants were to have included John Middleton Murry, Stephen Spender, Osbert Sitwell, and Gordon Craig (Chaubet, *Paul Desjardins et les Décades de Pontigny*, p. 227; André Gide, *Correspondance avec Paul Desjardins, Jacques Heurgon et Anne Heurgon-Desjardins*, ed. Pierre Masson [n.p.: Éditions des Cendres, 2011], p. 97). With the outbreak of war, the planned colloquium did not take place. Charles Du Bos, a leading animator of the "Décades" and a good friend of Maurois, had an English mother and was completely

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0004

bilingual; his published Journal constantly switches from French to English. For a lively personal picture of close Anglo-French relations in the Belle-Époque and up to World War II, see the memoirs of the painter and writer Jacques-Émile Blanche, *Portraits of a Lifetime*, trans. and ed. Walter Clement (London: J.M. Dent, 1937) and *More Portraits of a Lifetime*, trans. and ed. Walter Clement (London: J.M. Dent, 1939).

14 Paul Morand cited in Michel Droit, *André Maurois* (Paris: Éditions Universitaires, 1953), p. 92. On Coward, see *Memoirs 1885–1967*, p. 226.

15 "L'un des plus grands écrivains de tous les temps" (*Études américaines* [New York: Éditions de la Maison Française, 1945], p.112); "Remarques d'André Maurois," following the chapter "Contes et nouvelles" in Jacques Suffel, *André Maurois, avec des remarques par André Maurois* (Paris: Flammarion, 1963), p. 75. In a 1936 essay on Kipling Desmond MacCarthy noted that even after Kipling lost the huge popularity he had enjoyed in the heyday of British Imperialism, "it was among *literary* people, among literary artists and critics, that this master craftsman was apt to meet with grudging appreciation" (*Memories* [London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1953], p. 77).

16 Kipling's love of France dated from his childhood and is expressed in the poem "France" (1913), in *France at War* (1915), and in his little book *Souvenirs of France* (1933). Though Maurois himself compared himself to Disraeli, he might not, as a deeply patriotic Frenchman, have appreciated the tone of Kipling's comment on him, after their meeting: "I expect mother told you of our lunch at Sybil's and of meeting with André Maurois. He is the complete educated Semite, but his idea of writing a life of Rhodes interested me. I do not think he will find it quite as easy as that of his fellow-Oriental, Disraeli" (Letter from Kipling to his daughter Elsie Bambridge, 24 May 1928, in *Letters of Rudyard Kipling*, ed. Thomas Pinney [Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004], vol. 5, p. 431). It was also at Lady Colefax's that Maurois met Virginia Woolf (Letter of Woolf to Vanessa Bell, 25 May 1928, in *Congenial Spirits: Selected Letters of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Joann Trautmann Banks [London: Hogarth Press, 1989], p. 235).

17 "A Holiday Diary, 1928," *sub* 12 August, in André Maurois, *A Private Universe*, trans. Hamish Miles (London: Cassell; New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1932), pp. 28–30. In fact, Bateman's, a handsome Jacobean sandstone mansion situated 15 miles inland from Hastings, was built in 1634. Kipling's widow bequeathed it to the National Trust.

18 *Choses nues*, pp. 137–139.

19 *Memoirs 1885–1967*, pp. 281–282. Though delivered in English, the lectures on biography were retranslated into English for their English published version from the book published in French by Grasset as *Aspects de la biographie* (1928).

20 André Maurois, *Édouard VII et son temps* (Paris: Les Éditions de France, 1933), Note Liminaire, p. ii; André Maurois, "Le biographe et ses personnages:

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0004

vérité et poésie," *Annales-Conferencia*, 74 (nouvelle série, 196; February 1967), pp. 5–19, on p. 7.

21 According to the *New York Times*, 7 January 1940, in a move to demonstrate Franco-British solidarity, André Siegfried was to be offered a position at Oxford and André Maurois a position at Cambridge, while a British scientist was to be given an appointment at the Sorbonne.

22 Jacques Lecarme, *Drieu la Rochelle ou le bal des maudits* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2001), p. 315.

23 "From a Holiday Diary 1928," *sub* 3 August, in *A Private Universe*, p. 14.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0004

FIGURE 1 *Gide (centre) reading from one of his books at the Décades de Pontigny in 1923. Maurois behind him (immediately on Gide's left). Standing, on Gide's right, the bearded figure of Lytton Strachey.*

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0005

FIGURE 2 *André Maurois, Paul Valéry, and Paul Morand at Montmirail, 1932.*

FIGURE 3 *University officials and honorary degree recipients, Princeton University, 1933. Maurois, standing, third from left.*

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0005

II A Literary Phenomenon

Abstract: *Maurois was a prolific writer of best-selling novels, short stories, moral and critical essays, histories, children's books, even works of science fiction—all translated into multiple languages. He also wrote on both literary and political topics for French, British, and American newspapers and magazines. He was especially renowned as the author of fifteen full and several short biographies. In 1936 the English translation of his biography of Shelley was the first book selected for the newly established popular Penguin paperbacks.*

Gossman, Lionel. *André Maurois (1885–1967): Fortunes and Misfortunes of a Moderate*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0005.

Born in 1885, as Émile Salomon Wilhelm Herzog, into a highly assimilated Jewish family that had transferred its large cloth-weaving mill in Alsace, along with some 400 of the mill's workers, to Elbeuf near Rouen in Normandy after the German annexation of Alsace in 1871, Maurois—he himself recounts in his *Memoirs* how he came to adopt André Maurois as his *nom de plume* and then, finally, in 1947, as his legal name[1]—was not only one of the most respected writers of his time, he was also one of the most popular and certainly one of the most productive. His books sold in the hundreds of thousands of copies in Britain, America, and Germany (until they were banned there on racial grounds in 1933), as well as in France. When Allen Lane began his pioneering sixpenny Penguin paperback series in 1935, the English translation of Maurois' *Ariel*—a best-selling biography of Shelley originally published in 1923—was the first book selected for the popular format; it is Penguin no. 1. Two years later *Ariel* was joined as a Penguin paperback by the English translation of Maurois' biography of Disraeli (originally published in 1927). In the United States, the biographies of Disraeli and Byron were serialized in the monthly magazine *The Forum*. Almost everything Maurois wrote—much of it about the two English-speaking countries, their peoples, and cultures—was immediately translated into English and published in one edition after another.[2]

And he wrote a great deal: ten novels, from his first literary success, the amusing and wildly popular *Les Silences du Colonel Bramble*, based on his experiences as a French soldier attached to a Scottish unit of the British army in World War I and published in 1918 (Engl. trans., 1919), to his last work of fiction, *Les Roses de septembre* (1956; Engl. trans., 1958), by way of two other major successes—*Bernard Quesnay* (1926; Engl. trans., 1927) and *Climats* (1928; Engl. trans., 1929), the latter of which sold over two million copies in France alone—and *La Machine à lire les pensées* (1937; Engl. trans. 1938), one of several ventures into science fiction; as many volumes of collected short stories; numerous books on moral, literary, and political topics, such as *La Conversation* (1927; Engl. trans., 1930), *Un Art de vivre* (1939; Engl. trans., 1940), *Cinq visages de l'amour* (1942; Engl. trans., 1944), a witty and entertaining *Cours de bonheur conjugal* (1951; Engl. trans. 1953), *Lecture, mon doux plaisir* (1960; Engl. trans., 1960); substantial histories of England (1937; Engl. trans. 1937),[3] France (1947; Engl. trans. 1948), and the United States (1943–1944; Engl. trans., 1944), all three also in popular illustrated adaptations published by The Bodley Head in London and the Viking Press in New York (1960–1969),

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0005

together with an illustrated history of Germany (1965; Engl. trans., 1966); and—probably the best-known part of his work—at least fifteen major biographies, all but one promptly translated into English, beginning with *Ariel*, a life of Shelley in 1923, and continuing with lives of Disraeli (1927), Byron (1930), Turgenev (1931), Marshal Lyautey (1931), Edward VII of England (1933), Chateaubriand (1938), Proust (1949), George Sand (1951), Cecil Rhodes (1953), Victor Hugo (1954), three generations of the Dumas family (1957), Sir Alexander Fleming (1959),[4] Adrienne de La Fayette, the loyal, long-suffering wife of the hero of the American Revolution (1961), and finally, at the age of eighty, Balzac (1965), not to mention shorter studies of Dickens (1927), Voltaire (1935), and his beloved Alain (1951), and countless biographical portraits of twenty to forty pages, mostly—but not exclusively—of literary figures. Some of these last are among the best things he wrote. Who, having once read it, could forget the short, shrewd, wonderfully polished, urbanely sceptical and ironical, yet sympathetic and compassionate thirty-five-page portrait of the Brownings (accompanied by Maurois' own sensitive translations of ten of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's forty-four so-called *Sonnets from the Portuguese*) that opens the 1955 volume *Robert et Elizabeth Browning: Portraits suivis de quelques autres*, or the equally sharp, yet admiring accounts of Emily Dickinson and Ernest Hemingway that follow it in the same volume?[5]

Maurois also found time, throughout his life, to write countless articles and reviews for newspapers, such as *Le Figaro*, *Combat*, *The New York Times* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and for magazines ranging from the *Nouvelles Littéraires*, the *Revue Hebdomadaire*, the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, *the Revue des Deux Mondes, La Table Ronde*, *France Illustration*, the weekly *Samedi Soir*, and the *Neue Rundschau* to the *Atlantic Monthly*, *The Living Age*, *The Fortnightly*, *The Saturday Review*, *The Yale Review*, *Collier's Weekly*, *Life, Redbook Magazine*, and *Vanity Fair*—to say nothing of the *Daily Princetonian* and the *Princeton Alumni Weekly* during a stint as visiting professor of French literature at Princeton University in 1930–1931. As if this were not enough, between 1928 and 1961, he published several delightfully illustrated story books for children, one of which, *Patapoufs et Filifers*, having gone through several editions in French, English, German, Hebrew, and Turkish between 1930 and the 1980s, came out again this year (2013) in Russian; five biographies for younger readers (*Frédéric Chopin* [1942], *Eisenhower* [1945], *Franklin, la vie d'un optimiste* [1946], *Washington* [1946], and *Napoléon* [1964]); an amusing, still pertinent satire of an imaginary island community in

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0005

the Pacific in which the events and experiences of "real life" are valued solely as material for the production of little-understood works of art by a privileged caste of revered writers, painters, and musicians (*Voyage au pays des Articoles* [1928; Engl trans., 1928]); a charming, and affectionate pastiche of Proust, *Le Côté de Chelsea* (1929; Engl. trans., 1930), which its most recent English re-translator, the celebrated Proust biographer George D. Painter, judged both "an act of devotion" and "the finest prose parody in French literature";[6] a translation into French of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1944); a large number of prefaces to the works of other writers; many thoughtful and well-informed essays on questions of science, philosophy, and economics, including speculations about a technological future in which the novelist and biographer envisaged the proliferation of cell phones ("telephotophones") and the displacement of coal and oil by wind turbines and "maritime power stations making use of the differences of temperature between superimposed currents";[7] and a book on the neoclassical painter David (1948), the copious illustrations of which were ingeniously devised to demonstrate the argument of the introduction and of the lengthy commentaries on the works represented, namely that David's true vocation as a painter was to be a realist and that this is visible not only in his portraits but in the detail of his monumental set pieces. Maurois even collaborated, mostly with his son Gérald, a photographer, on several guide books: Malta (1935), London (1936), Rio de Janeiro, which he had visited on a highly successful literary tour of Latin America (1951), Holland (1955), and, in the world-renowned *Guides Bleus* series, the French province of Périgord (1955), where his second wife Simone de Caillavet had inherited a beautiful country home, now a luxury resort. In 1955, he was asked by Francis Ambrière, then in charge of the Blue Guides at the publishing house of Hachette, to contribute to the celebration of the centenary of the series. This resulted in *Portrait de la France et des Français* (1955), a loving tribute to France, its people, its provinces, and its traditions, and a bold vision of the changes the country must be ready to embrace in order to prosper in an age in which science and technology are destined, in Maurois' view, to play an ever more important role.

In addition, two volumes of memoirs appeared in 1942, and a new edition of these, revised and updated by the author shortly before his death in 1967, was published posthumously in 1970. In style and tone these autobiographical memoirs resemble his biographies; they are charmingly

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0005

and vividly evocative of a world that has now vanished, while at the same time offering an instructive and insightful account of public life and politics from the point of view of a cultivated, liberally minded observer who had had access to many of the leading players, along with an engaging narrative of the writer's personal life, including his two marriages, that reads like one of his novels.

By 1938 the editor of the *Daily Princetonian*, the student newspaper at Princeton University, could already with good reason declare that "the versatile M. Maurois has done successful work in almost every field of literature."[8] Princeton's Dean Christian Gauss, who brought Maurois to his university as a visiting professor in 1930 and maintained a cordial relationship with him until late in life, was equally impressed. "Are you really trying to out-Balzac Balzac?" he asked at once ironically and admiringly. "How do you ever manage to get out all the thorough work you do and keep it on so high a level of excellence?"[9]

Notes

1 *Memoirs 1885–1967*, p. 110. Maurois's intention was not to mask his Jewish descent. As he was still serving in the army as Émile Herzog, he had been told by his commanding officer that he must use a pseudonym for his book. Like his parents, Maurois was not a practising Jew; he thought of himself and presented himself as, above all, a patriotic Frenchman. But he never sought to conceal that he was Jewish by birth. Thus, along with other intellectuals, Jewish and non-Jewish, such as Léon Blum, Albert Einstein, Maxime Gorki, and the physicist Paul Langevin, he participated in the LICA or *Ligue internationale contre l'antisémitisme* (Simon Epstein, *Les dreyfusards sous l'Occupation* [Paris: Albin Michel, 2001], p. 52). "I am Jewish and have never denied it, but I am French first and foremost," he responded in 1941 to Henry Bernstein's charge that by changing his name from Herzog to Maurois and refusing, at the time of the fall of France, to denounce Pétain he was "denying his Jewish origins" (G. Henry-Haye, *La grande Éclipse franco-américaine* [Paris: Plon, 1972], pp. 276–277). "Like me, he was a Jew," he told Jacques Suffel, whose book on Maurois appeared in 1963, when explaining why he was drawn to Disraeli as the subject of a biography (*André Maurois* [as in I, note 15], p. 95) and he repeated this explanation to a *New York Times* interviewer in the spring of 1967, the year of his death: "He [Disraeli] was Jewish, I was Jewish myself. He was for me an example of how to get on with a Christian society" (Obituary by Alden Whitman, *New York Times*, 10 October 1967). He did not convert when he

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0005

married either the Catholic Janine Szymkiewicz or his second wife Simone de Caillavet. The hope that he might have done so harboured by Michelle Maurois, Maurois' and Szymkiewicz's daughter, who was under pressure during the Occupation of France to provide proof of her "aryenneté," turned out, after frantic research in the baptismal archives of Paris churches, to be without foundation (Jeanne Pouquet, *Journal sous l'occupation en Périgord 1942–1945*, ed. Marcel Loyau [Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 2006], pp. 41–42, letters from Michelle Maurois to Jeanne Pouquet 30 June and 8 July 1943). From his scattered writings on the topic of religion, it is fair to conclude that Maurois was an agnostic, acutely aware of the limitations of human knowledge, yet respectful, provided fanaticism and oppressive dogmatism are avoided, of the human need for all-embracing explanations and of the varied and evolving religious institutions that supply such explanations. See the brief but useful comments on Maurois' relation to Judaism in *Il n'y a qu'un amour,* Dominique Bona's biography of Maurois and the women in his life (Paris: Grasset, 2003), p. 50. See also Bona's discussion of Simone de Caillavet's attitude to Jews and to her part-Jewish background (*Il n'y a qu'un amour*, pp. 236–239).

2 The academic editors of a 1936 edition of the novel *Climats* for use in American college classes in French language and literature note that "Maurois has truly in the last decade become a citizen of the world. His prolific output of novels and biographies has been translated into English almost before the ink has dried on the French editions" (New York: Henry Holt and Company, p. viii). On the spectacular sales of Maurois' books, see Jack Kolbert, *The Worlds of André Maurois* [as in I, note 8], p. 141, and the obituary of Maurois in *The Times*, 10 October 1967. Allen Lane was the nephew of John Lane, founder and director of The Bodley Head, the distinguished British publishing house that first put out many of the English translations of Maurois' works.

3 Reviewed by Marc Bloch, one of the two founders of the prestigious *Annales* school of historians, in *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, 10 (1938): 189–190.

4 It is a sign of Maurois' celebrity as "one of the greatest living exponents of biographical writing" (as he was described in a review of his *Aspects of Biography* in *The New York Times* for 14 July 1929) that Lady Fleming, "the widow of the Scottish scientist who discovered penicillin," initiated the project by personally asking Maurois to write the biography of her husband: "I would like my husband's life to be written and I would like it to be written by you." When Maurois protested his ignorance of microbiology, the Greek-born Lady Amalia (Dr. Amalia Coutsouris-Voureka) came to Paris and overrode his objections: "Well then, she told me, you will learn it" (*Memoirs 1885–1967*, p. 370; *The Life of Sir Alexander Fleming* [New York: E.P.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0005

Dutton, 1959], p. 11; "Le biographe et ses personnages," *Annales-Conferencia*, 74 [February 1967]: 5–19, on p. 7). In fact, with the help of Lady Amalia, "herself a doctor and bacteriologist," and a number of French scientist friends, Maurois mastered enough of the science to produce a text that, while not one of his best, is understandable by the layman. "I began my literary career as a young man with *The Silences of Colonel Bramble*, a taciturn Scot," Maurois declared in his foreword. "There would, I felt, be a certain satisfying intellectual symmetry about writing, in my old age, *The Silences of Professor Fleming*. The two men had much the same virtues, though in different forms" (*The Life of Sir Alexander Fleming*, pp. 11–12).

5 The sonnets translated by Maurois were nos. I, XV, XX, XXI, XXIII, XXVII, XXX, XXXVIII, XLIII, XLIV. The insularity of English studies probably explains why neither Maurois' essay nor the massive 500-page, purely literary study by Paul de Reul (*L'Art et la Pensée de Robert Browning* [Brussels: Maurice Lamertin, 1929]) figures in any modern English-language works devoted to Robert or Elizabeth Barrett Browning, including Stefan Hawlin's *Complete Critical Guide to Robert Browning* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002). Maurois, in contrast, as was his wont, acknowledges Betty Miller's readable, recently published *Robert Browning: A Portrait* (London: John Murray, 1952) as the principal source for his own portrait of the Brownings and Richard Chase's *Emily Dickinson* (London: William Sloane, 1951) as the chief source for his portrait of Dickinson. Maurois' Browning volume also contained portraits of Kleist, Gogol, the young James Boswell, and Hemingway. See also *Destins exemplaires* (1952), with sketches of Maurice Barrès, Chekhov, Goethe, Shakespeare, Ignatius de Loyola, Vauvenargues, Napoleon, Alfred de Vigny, and his personal friends Charles Du Bos, Maurice Baring, and Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, among others, and *Grands Écrivains du demi-siècle* (1957), in which his subjects were Alain, Bergson, Georges Duhamel, Jacques de Lacretelle, Roger Martin du Gard, François Mauriac, Péguy, Proust, Jules Romains, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, and Valéry. The full-length biography of Lyautey (1931) had been preceded by a shorter narrative, dated February 1925, of a visit to Morocco, in which Lyautey is the central character ("Arabesques," *Revue Hebdomadaire*, 10 [October 1925]: 268–292; also published in a deluxe limited edition of 73 pp. on very fine paper in a series wittily entitled "La Folie du Sage," chez Marcelle Lesage, 1925).

6 *The Chelsea Way, or Marcel in England*, trans. George D. Painter (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), pp. 7–8. The little text first appeared in the *Revue de Paris*, 15 January 1929, pp. 263–297. It was then published in book form in a limited and numbered edition of 1260 copies (*Supplément à Mélanges et Pastiches. Le Côté de Chelsea* [Paris: Éditions du Trianon, 1929]), and in a new edition by Gallimard in 1932. An English translation, by Maurois' regular translator Hamish Miles, appeared in a limited edition

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0005

of 500 copies in 1930 and was reprinted in the collection entitled *A Private Universe* (as in I, note 17), pp. 50–96.

7 See, for instance, "Hypothetical Futures," in *A Private Universe*, pp. 152–156.

8 *Daily Princetonian,* 7 October 1938. "Although Maurois' reputation rests primarily on his work as a biographer and a novelist, [. . .] the versatility of the man is amazing," the editors of the 1936 college edition of *Climats* observe in their introduction (see note 2 above). "He has written both in French and English, critical and philosophical essays, literary columns, short stories, reminiscences, and travelogues" (p. xxi). "He was a jack of almost all genres—biography, history, diction, essays and criticism of manners," in the words of Alan Whitman, the author of his obituary in the *New York Times*. "Biography, however, was his true genius and the basis for his enduring reputation" (*New York Times*, 10 October 1967). Whitman quotes a comment made by Maurois to a *New York Times* interviewer: "I get up at 7 a.m. and am at my desk at 8 and work all day long. I write every day, except for Sunday. [. . .] The job of a writer is to write": The year of his death still saw the publication of *Trois portraits de femmes* (Paris: Hachette, 1967), short biographical studies of the Duchess of Devonshire, the Countess of Albany (the wife of the Stuart pretender to the British throne), and Henriette Marie de France (the wife of Charles I of England).

9 Letter from Dean Christian Gauss to André Maurois, 19 December 1932 (Princeton University Library, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Christian Gauss Papers, series 2, box 67, folder 13). Maurois regularly sent Gauss copies of his latest work. On his side, the Dean read over the manuscript of Maurois' *Histoire des États-Unis* and corrected errors he had found in it—for which he was thanked by both Maurois and his wife and close collaborator, Simone (Caillavet) Maurois (letter of Simone Maurois to Gauss, 2 September 1943; letter of Gauss to Maurois, 15 September 1943 [ibid.]).

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0005

III The Middle Road

Abstract: *Having had to run the family business for a time, Maurois the writer and intellectual could see different sides of most issues. He recognized the value of practice as well as principle, action as well as reflection, tradition as well as innovation. He was on easy terms with politicians and military men as well as poets. On all topics he adopted a moderate stance and aimed to keep an open mind. A quintessential liberal, he disliked and feared excessive systematizing and dogmatic extremes; he admired the English because he saw in them the embodiment of his own sceptical empiricism and preference for adaptation and tolerance.*

Gossman, Lionel. André Maurois (1885–1967) *Fortunes and Misfortunes of a Moderate*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0006.

Maurois' celebrity was based not only on his literary work but on his role as a public figure representing and speaking out for classic liberal and humanistic values, and in particular for the combination of conservatism and readiness to adapt to changing circumstances, the realism and pragmatism, the tolerance and openness that he associated above all with Britain and the United States. "It is the British liberalism of the nineteenth century," he wrote in a review of Élie Halévy's *History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century*, "which has shown and still continues to show us the road to a true and gentle civilization." Similarly, it was the empirical and practical spirit of the British that had enabled them, he claimed, to adapt to a changing world while avoiding the destructive conflicts and tensions that afflicted cultures more attached to logic and systematic reasoning. There was an advantage to the British willingness to live with inconsistency. "No less ancient, no less proud than France, England resolved the problem [of its relation to its past] in an empirical manner by retaining traditions and ceremonies that are of no importance in themselves, but provide a screen of veneration under cover of which the English can be resolutely modern without offending their sense of historical continuity. They have fairy-tale queens, peers in ermine-lined cloaks, bewigged judges, medieval colleges, but they boldly carry out huge transfers among the social classes."[1]

As the son of a mill owner, Maurois had had to delay the literary career to which he felt drawn in order to play his part, on his father's retirement, in the management of the Herzog family firm, by then a very substantial enterprise with over 2,000 workers. This experience enabled him to understand and, in some measure, sympathize with the values of the practical businessman, industrialist or statesman as well as with those of the artist and intellectual. He also served in the military in both world wars and retained from that experience a respect for the army as an institution in which discipline—ideally—is combined with initiative and the ability to size up situations rapidly and act accordingly. The impatience with dreaming, fantasy, and excessive intellectualizing or estheticizing which he reported having encountered among a number of the young American students in his literature class at Princeton was a feeling to which he himself was no stranger, as his admiration for the "empirical" outlook of the British and the Americans, many passages in his *Memoirs*, articles, and prefaces, and the delightfully satirical *Voyage au pays des Articoles* testify.[2] Indeed, he too, as a young man, had once been sufficiently emboldened by a conviction of the importance of

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0006

what he believed was practical common sense to question an opinion expressed in one of the famous "*Propos*," which his beloved teacher and high-minded mentor "Alain" contributed regularly to the *Dépêche de Rouen*, the Rouen area newspaper. When Alain decided to publish his former student's letter to him in the paper, he identified himself as "The Just Man" ["*l'homme qui a la passion de la justice*"] and his former student, the young Maurois, as "The Practical Man" ["*le Praticien*"].[3]

Maurois's friend, Charles Du Bos, explained and justified the pragmatic outlook they both espoused. "Symptomatic of our time," Du Bos, whose mother was English, noted in his *Journal*,

> is the unjustifiable attitude that thinking men adopt towards action [...], above all a manifest snobbery that results in their lending their support to any doctrine that has an extremist character. [...] If Maurois deliberately directs his attention to the sphere of the practical, that is because he and I [...] are deeply interested only in those ideas that can be lived and incorporated into our daily existence. [...] Maurois always fastens, as if by instinct, on what is possible. His philosophy rests on a clear delimitation of what he calls the territory of the possible. He likes to quote Molé's critical judgment of Napoleon: that he was incapable of recognizing the point at which the limit of the possible had been reached.[4]

Another favourite quotation of Maurois' was from Descartes: "I have made it my habit to alter my desires rather than the order of the world, and to consider that what has not come about is, so far as I was concerned, an absolute impossibility." That Maurois understood this as simply a sensible acknowledgement of our human limitations and in no way as a recipe for inaction or withdrawal from the world is made clear by the immediately following practical admonitions: "Choose.—Never sulk about your own actions.—Begin nothing without considered choice, and always finish what has been begun. Never hate, but be able to fight nevertheless. (The maxim '*tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner*' is true in the field of inner life, but false in the order of active life.)"[5]

Maurois himself acknowledged that he was drawn, as a biographer, to figures such as Disraeli, Byron, and Chateaubriand because they were both writers and men of action.[6] The very attraction of biography as a genre for him may have been partly due to the opportunity it provided of intervening actively to impose a degree of order on unchangeable facts, to combine and reconcile literature and history, art and politics, the constructive freedom of the human imagination and the constraint of limited objective evidence—"the truth of real life and the truth of fiction," as

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0006

Virginia Woolf wrote in a 1927 essay on "The New Biography" (in which Maurois and Strachey figure as representative of the "completely altered point of view" of the so-called new biographers).[7] To the comment that, whereas the novel is an imaginative construct, the biographer is obliged to work from testimonies and documents, Maurois replied: "Paul Valéry has often said that an artist needs constraints, that the requirements of regular verse patterns and rhyme produce unexpected forms of beauty, that the niche is a help to the sculptor as the site is to the architect. Why should this not also be the case for the biographer?"[8]

Not surprisingly, Maurois consorted regularly and comfortably with men of action. He was a friend, as well as a long-time admirer, of Marshal Hubert Lyautey, the brilliant French officer who served as military governor and then Resident General of Morocco, and whom he took as the subject of one of his biographies. He had direct contact, in the field, with British and French officers in World War I and with the top military brass in 1939–1940, when he was called on to give pep talks to the troops in both armies. Through the family of his second wife, Simone de Caillavet—who had been Proust's model for Mlle de Saint-Loup and whose Jewish-born grandmother, Léontine Arman-Caillavet, had presided over a salon frequented by writers from Anatole France, her lover, to Pierre Loti, Charles Maurras, and Marcel Proust, celebrated artists such as Sarah Bernhardt, and statesmen of the calibre of Clemenceau, Jaurès, and Blum—he got to know and learned to appreciate political leaders such as Raymond Poincaré and Aristide Briand.[9] Subsequently, the biographer who had confessed to "being unable, for very many reasons, to lead a life of political activity" himself and to having therefore taken "a passionate pleasure in joining in the struggle by donning the mask" of Disraeli,[10] was on excellent terms with various French prime ministers, presidents, and other leading politicians: Edouard Herriot, Georges Bonnet, Édouard Daladier, Georges Mandel, Paul Reynaud, Vincent Auriol, René Coty, Pierre Mendès-France. The longstanding connection of Léon Blum with the family of Simone led to a lunch invitation in 1937 from the new Socialist Prime Minister, when the politician and the writer were both staying at the Golf Hotel in Valescure, near St. Raphael, on the Riviera. Though not a Socialist, Maurois was also not a fanatical anti-Socialist and, characteristically, found much to admire in Blum, who had a considerable and well-deserved reputation as a man of letters, was a friend of Gide, had once been the literary critic of the *Revue blanche*, and had written on topics close to Maurois' heart, notably a

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0006

350-page book on marriage and a biography and literary appreciation of Stendhal. "Un homme affable, cultivé, sensible," he noted, with "a strong desire to act effectively, as well as generosity, and a great deal of courage."[11] Maurois could well have seen in Blum, the patriotic writer-statesman of Jewish background, a modern French equivalent of Disraeli.

"Circumstances, my books and my friendships," he was to write in his *Memoirs*, "have made me the advocate and incarnation of a close *entente* between France, England and the United States. The moment a difficulty seemed to be dividing these three countries, the government asked me to write, sometimes in French, sometimes in English, articles designed to clear up the misunderstanding. At every Franco-British celebration, whether literary or sporting in nature, the anniversary of an important writer or the commemoration of some event, I was requested to be present and to deliver a speech. I might have refused? No doubt, but I deeply believed in the necessity of maintaining those always fragile bonds if one wished to save our liberal civilization."[12] Maurois was on friendly terms with every British ambassador to France in the 1920s and 1930s, dining with them at the embassy, receiving them at his own home in Neuilly, or sometimes being invited with Simone to stay with them in England. His capacity to mediate was appreciated by politicians on both sides of the Channel, especially during periods of tension in Anglo-French relations between the two world wars. Ambassador Sir Willam Tyrell, for instance, asked him to be present at one meeting between Léon Blum and Ramsay MacDonald "pour mettre du liant" ["in order to make things go smoothly"].[13] He got to meet almost as many British as French statesmen and politicians. At a dinner given by the English delegation to the 1932 Lausanne conference on World War I reparations, he was seated between the then Prime Minister MacDonald and his daughter and discussed jazz and feminism with them. In 1935, at a luncheon given by the Countess of Rothes in London, he met Winston Churchill, who had been "delighted" by his Disraeli,[14] but who, more and more alarmed by developments in Germany, drew him aside and urged him to stop working on novels and biographies and to write only article after article on a single topic: "that the French Air Force, once the first in the world, is in the process of falling back to fourth or fifth rank." Soon after, Maurois published a well-written, admiring portrait of Churchill in the publisher Gallimard's left-leaning paper *Marianne* (1932–1940), reproduced in English translation in the January 1937 issue of Littell's monthly *The Living Age*, under the rubric "Persons and Personages." In

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0006

1937 he had lunch with Clement Attlee, the Labour Party leader, in whom he found "intelligence, modération, humour"—probably the three qualities he most admired.[15]

The respect in which Maurois was held as a commentator on political, social, and economic matters, as well as the access he enjoyed to prominent and influential figures in the world of politics and business led to his being commissioned by the publisher Gallimard to visit the United States in 1932 and report on Roosevelt and the New Deal. The well-informed, thoughtful and readable little work that resulted from that commission, published first in instalments in Gallimard's newspaper *Marianne* and then in book form as *Chantiers américains* (1933), can still interest readers today. (In fact, it turns out to have a surprising relevance to the crisis of 2008.) In addition to regular reports on the literary scene in Paris and essays on literary topics such as the influence of contemporary American writers on European literature, *The New York Times* published many articles by Maurois on subjects ranging from "Europe watches Detroit and Moscow" (12 January 1930, on the choice for Europe between capitalism and socialism) and "New Business Morals for Old" (12 July 1931, on the need, in the light of the Crash of 1929, for a new moral code for the financial industry and for capitalist economies in general) to "The New Era that is before Mankind" (11 September 1932, on the competing claims of collectivism and individualism, economic planning and free enterprise), "Puzzled France: Which Way?" (31 May 1936, on the newly elected Popular Front government of Léon Blum), "The Tragic Decline of the Human Ideal" (19 January 1938, on the decline of liberalism and the "menacing shadows that loom threateningly over the planet" from Europe to the Far East) and "The Undying Spirit of France" (1 March 1942, a patriotic affirmation of the inner resistance of the French to their German occupiers, ending on an inevitable evocation of the spirit of Joan of Arc). Near the end of his career, as part of an effort to promote *détente*, he agreed to collaborate with the Communist poet Louis Aragon on a multi-volume "Parallel History" of the USSR and the USA. from 1917 to 1961 with Aragon contributing the history of the USSR during this time and Maurois that of the USA. While breaking no new ground from a scholarly point of view, Maurois' account of this period of American history, which was soon translated into English, is broadly conceived, consistently well-informed, remarkably insightful, written with style, and still relevant to issues facing the United States in the twenty-first century. (Judged "culturally important," it was, in fact,

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0006

reproduced by the reprint publisher Nabu Press in 2011 and is available from online booksellers.)

Perhaps the old-fashioned term "man of letters" fits Maurois better than any other. In general, an ability to interest himself in and write about a wide range of individuals and activities and to acknowledge, respect, and sympathize with multiple points of view, together with a commitment to tolerance and reconciliation and an aversion to rigidity and exclusiveness, may well have been André Maurois' most essential characteristics. At very least, they were those he wanted to propagate and demonstrate in his writing, and to have others attribute to him. Just as, in his first literary success in 1918, his French hero Aurelle admired the intelligence of the English because, "equally remote from our own classical rationalism and from the pedantic imagination of the Germans," it "delights in vigorous common sense and the absence of any kind of systems,"[16] and just as, in 1930, during his tenure of a visiting professorship at Princeton, he listened and responded without condescension to the opinions of the undergraduates in his literature preceptorial, so in his Clark lectures at Cambridge on "Aspects of biography," after contrasting the heavy tomes of the Victorians, stuffed with documents and information, and the modern style of biography, represented by Lytton Strachey, as "a work of art," he argued that "we may quite sincerely admire the qualities of one type of biography and at the same time admit the existence of another."[17]

Around the same time, in a diary entry dated 12 August 1928, he recorded approvingly a remark Kipling made to him over lunch on that day. To his telling Kipling of having read *Kim* "twenty or even thirty times" and of the great popularity of Kipling's tales among young people in France, Kipling responded: "In England the younger generation have rather moved away from me. They are looking for something different, and that's as it should be. If a young writer were unlucky enough to be over-fond of my books he would simply write Kiplingese, and would not find his own legs… Yes, certainly, the young must be rather unfair to their elders."[18] And again, decades later, in the Zaharoff lecture on "Nouvelles directions de la littérature française," which he delivered at Oxford in 1967, at the age of eighty-two (and at the invitation of my own former teacher, Jean Seznec), he aimed to show that he was quite ready to respond positively to the objectives and literary practices of the new school of French novelists (Michel Butor, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Nathalie Sarraute, Claude Simon) as well as to the new criticism, and even to Roland Barthes' distinction—by which, as a writer, he might easily have

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0006

felt targeted himself—of "écrivants" and "écrivains" (communicators, for whom language is an instrument, and artists, for whom it is a medium). "Fortunately," he declared at the very beginning of the lecture, "this old writer is not put off or horrified by the experiments of a new generation. The very existence of Oxford, where this lecture is being given, is testimony to the cumulative nature of culture. Just as there is a macroscopic and traditional physics and a microscopic physics of particles and just as the two are not contradictory but complementary, so it is with the old novel and the new novel, classical poetry and surrealist poetry. Proust does not supplant Balzac; he admires him. Claude Simon does not supplant Proust; he reminds us of him. The 'new criticism' does not supplant the old. It adds to it."[19] In a passage in the *Memoirs*, dating from a few years before the Zaharoff lecture, he had made the same point about continuity in change, rather than discontinuity and opposition. His own manner of writing has not changed over the years, he wrote, yet he can appreciate the work of the new novelists:

> After sixty years of work my manner of storytelling had hardly changed. It remained simple and direct. Not that I was indifferent to new forms. [...] The experiments of the young French writers in attempting to renovate the novel interested me. Around 1930 I had found diversion in writing a hundred or so pages in the manner of Marcel Proust: *Le Côté de Chelsea*. In the same playful manner I could have amused myself by doing imitations of Robbe-Grillet or Nathalie Sarraute. But my natural way of writing would have returned at a gallop the instant I began to write under my own name. I did not feel at all as though I were living outside my time. The masters acclaimed by the writers of the "new novel" were among those I admired: Marcel Proust, Joyce, Kafka. Surrealism never alarmed me and I was aware how much it had contributed to a writer like Aragon. I was willing to admit that a shock may be necessary to tear minds away from the monotony of a formula. [...] As president of the jury of the Bourse del Duca, I had had the prize awarded to Robbe-Grillet, then a beginner; as a member of the reading committee for the Comédie Française, I voted for Ionesco. I was not opposed to experiments. At the same time I distinguished between those that were designed to bring a closer understanding of reality and those that were simply meant to startle.[20]

Even at the beginning of his own career as a writer, he had shown keen interest, as we shall see shortly, in the experiments with the modern novel of Virginia Woolf, of whom he wrote in 1925 that "among the writers of our time she is one of those whom I admire the most and

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0006

who touch me most deeply." Similarly, two decades later, he displayed remarkable openness to and appreciation of Gertrude Stein in a review of her *Wars I have Seen* that he wrote for the wartime New York weekly *Pour la Victoire*. In France, he found good things to say about Céline's provocative, rough-edged *Voyage au bout de la Nuit*.[21] To Maurois, ideas and practices different from one's own did not necessarily pose a threat to the latter or require their abandonment. On the contrary, interest in and respect for the views and values of others was entirely compatible with and even required by the liberal and undogmatic stance to which he adhered throughout his life and in which he took pride.

Among the many brilliant portraits of statesmen in *Edouard VII et son temps*, that of Lord Rosebery may well reflect a special sympathy on the part of the author and may offer a clue to the latter's own character. Rosebery was not really cut out for politics, we are told, and did not enjoy leading his party. "He was widely read, wrote well, spoke eloquently. [...] His mind was too sensitive to accept the downrightness of party dogmas, his judgment too exact to convince, as Mr. Gladstone had done, 'other men of many things and himself of anything whatsoever.' He was too much Rosebery to be a Roseberian. He meditated; he evolved; he was disconcerting." Though he supported the Boer war out of loyalty and patriotism, he thought it was a mistake and one of his speeches became "a signal for peace in South Africa." This

> heightened his prestige and proved his authority; but he effaced himself. Several times during his years of retirement he had set down sincere, disillusioned notes for his own use: "Why do I say that it is impossible for me to form a Government?—I should not bring harmony to the Liberal party. I shall always be (and justly) an object of suspicion to the Radical party, or rather to the pro-Boer, pro-Armenian, pro-Macedonian and generally hysterical section of it... I do not blame these people, nor do I blame myself. I simply record a natural antipathy. Were I more of a humbug I might surmount it ..." The truth of the matter was that Rosebery, too intelligent to be a simple-minded partisan, was too honest to feign a calculated conformity. Concern for the general interest, and for his own frail health, prevailed over political passion, and the double weakness crippled him in any race for power.[22]

Maurois could not have noted with indifference that in later life this intelligent, open-minded, and cripplingly undogmatic statesman took to writing biographies—of Napoleon (1900), Lord Randolph Churchill (1906), Lord Chatham (1910), and Pitt (1923).

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0006

At the same time, it remained Maurois' considered judgment that the wise statesman must act in order to adapt the social order to inevitably changing circumstances and to avoid drastic and destructive transformations. "The social order can be stable only if the relation $\frac{\text{institution}}{\text{facts}}$ is constant. Every variation in that connection is matched by an injustice and every injustice by a disorder. The unwavering care of the true friend of order is to adjust institutions to fact. Disraeli made the Conservative Party a popular party. That was no paradox. An intelligent conservative is always a reformer." The same wisdom, Maurois suggests, is required in the moral and personal life of the individual—in a marriage, for instance.[23]

Among his own contemporaries, Maurois bears some resemblance to an English counterpart and friend, Harold Nicolson. Like Nicolson, he was deeply liberal in his outlook, and, though he did not have the moderately active diplomatic and political career that, as the son of a successful British career diplomat, Nicolson was able to have, he followed current events no less closely, mixed easily and often with politicians, diplomats and military men, and, like Nicolson, wrote frequently, as we have seen, on current affairs questions in newspapers and magazines. Nicolson was also a prolific biographer, especially of literary and political figures (Swinburne, Tennyson, Verlaine, Byron, Constant, Sainte-Beuve, Curzon, his father Sir Arthur Nicolson, and the fabulously wealthy American businessman and diplomat Dwight Morrow) and, like Maurois, was the author of a book on biography as a genre. Less successful than Maurois as a novelist, he nevertheless aspired to be a writer of fiction as well as of biography. His *Some People* (1927) is an original mixture of fiction and biography, the main purpose of which was to convey indirectly something of the author himself—an infrequently evoked aspect of biographical writing that Maurois was to emphasize in both a 1927 lecture at Yale on "The Modern Biographer" (published that same year as an article in the *Yale Review*) and in his 1928 Cambridge lectures on "Aspects of Biography."[24] Reviewing *Some People*, Virginia Woolf observed that "few books illustrate the new attitude to biography better than this one. [Nicolson] has devised a method of writing about people and about himself as though they were at once real and imaginary. He has succeeded remarkably in making the best of both worlds"—that is, in combining faithfulness to historical fact and imagination.[25] Nicolson was also, like Maurois, seen as a "stylish" writer. He knew French literature

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0006

very well and admired it. One reviewer of his biography of Tennyson even described his work as "French in its finish and good taste.[…] Every sentence," this reviewer went on, "is well-turned, the parts all fit into a prearranged whole." The portrait of Tennyson is "delicately drawn, sympathetic and amusing."[26]

The two men knew and admired each other's work. Maurois considered Nicolson "one of the best writers of our time," and Nicolson returned the compliment. Maurois, he wrote in *The New York Times* was "the best of living biographers. He is lucid, vivid, impartial, and gifted with unusual psychological insight."[27] Maurois cited Nicolson's biography of Byron admiringly in his article on the new biography in the *Yale Review*, consulted Nicolson on his own biography of Byron, and thanked him publicly for his help. He also referred with great respect to Nicolson's study of biography in his own *Aspects of Biography*. Later he quoted with obvious sympathy Nicolson's judgment of Friedrich Hayek's uncompromising defense of radical economic liberalism in his magnum opus *The Road to Serfdom*: " 'Logically, Professor Hayek may be right, but we English do not like to lead our ideas from premises, however true, to a rigorously logical conclusion.' " In Nicolson's response to Hayek—admiration, but also mistrust—Maurois discerned that scepticism with respect to systems and dogmas that he himself associated with the British and that had always drawn him to them: "This is an authentically British, and in some measure legitimate criticism," he went on. "After all, England has succeeded in retaining her greatness by finding illogical solutions to the questions of the monarchy, the Upper House and the Dominions. It is understandable that she does not despair of the possibility of finding a compromise in the matter of economics. The vast universe of beings and things cannot be reduced to a simple opposition of two abstract terms: liberalism and planning."[28] In 1934, Maurois arranged for Nicolson to be invited to contribute a weekly "letter on English life" to the reconstituted *Figaro*, with which he was associated.[29] And in 1940, when France decided to seek a separate peace with Germany, he wrote a moving note to Nicolson, expressing his appreciation of the "compréhension" with which Nicolson, a life-long Francophile, had responded to the news. On his side, when Maurois decided to leave London for New York in the summer of 1940, it was Nicolson who obtained a passage for him on board a ship evacuating British children from Glasgow to Canada.[30]

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0006

Notes

1 Review of Halévy in *New York Times*, 5 February 1933. While objecting in his review to Halévy's description of the British liberal ideal as an "illusion," Maurois subsequently distinguished between the divergent meanings of the term "liberal" in Britain and the U.S.; see his *From My Journal*, trans. Joan Charles (New York and London: Harper & Brother, 1948), pp. 41–42. On the British way of resolving the tension between tradition and modernity, see *Portrait de la France et des Français* (Paris: Hachette, 1955), p. 19. In the same spirit Maurois contrasted "le dirigisme empirique de Roosevelt (*New Deal*)," with the rigid opposition of Right and Left in France, which he claimed had prevented the country from resolving the economic and political problems of the 1930s (*Portrait de la France et des Français*, pp. 37–38).

2 See his account of his preceptorial in French literature 406 at Princeton, "Étudiants américains et romans français," in his *Amérique inattendue* (Paris: Éditions Mornay, 1931, pp. 47–80; Engl. trans. in A. Maurois, *A Private Universe*, trans. Hamish Miles [New York: D. Appleton, 1932], pp. 319–336).

3 See the texts (*Propos*, dated 1, 3, and 13 November 1911) in *Alain et Rouen 1900–1914*, ed. Emmanuel Blondel *et al.* (Rouen: Éditions PTC, 2007), pp. 151–153. In his teaching Alain, in fact, encouraged his students to pay serious attention to alternative points of view. In one of several interviews with the journalist Frédéric Lefèvre, published in the *Nouvelles Littéraires* (1 May 1926), Maurois recalled that his teacher's method was Socratic and that he liked to assign essay topics such as "Dialogue entre un sacristain et un capitaine des pompiers sur l'existence de Dieu" ["Dialogue of a sexton and a fire brigade captain concerning the existence of God"], admonishing his students to avoid "hackneyes phrases" and everything "médiocre and trite" (Frédéric Lefèvre, *Une Heure avec*, ed. Nicole Villeroux [Nantes and Laval: Siloë, 1997], vol. 3, p. 14). Good arguments were to be presented, in short, on both sides of a question. This kind of class assignment doubtless underlies Maurois' later *Dialogues sur le commandement* (1924).

4 Charles Du Bos, *Journal*, 8 vols (Paris: Corrêa, 1946–1961), vol. 2 (1924–1925), p. 237 (10 January 1925).

5 "A Holiday Diary, 1928," in *A Private Universe* (as in note 2 above), p. 30. The citation from Descartes occurs again in the essay "Childhood and Wisdom," *A Private Universe*, p. 168. Cf. in the same spirit, the succinct admonition in a facsimile signed inscription in the Princeton University Library's copy of *Portrait d'un ami qui s'appelait moi* (Namur and Paris: Wesmael-Charlier, 1959): "Soyez modestes et hardis" ["Be modest and bold"].

6 André Maurois, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 5 (Paris: Bibliothèque Bernard Grasset chez Arthème Fayard 1951), preface, pp. i–ii. After the enormous success of his first biography, that of Shelley, Maurois frequently wrote that it was truly

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0006

a novel—and had indeed started out as a novel—even though, to the best of his knowledge, all the facts were "true," and that it had functioned as a "deliverance from himself," that is, from "the errors of an idealist." In *Disraeli*, in contrast, his next biography and, in his own estimation, the first of his "biographies véritables," he "had to deal with an entirely new character—the romantic who is at the same time a man of action" (*Aspects of Biography* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929], pp. 106–111; *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 15 [1953], pp. i–v [new preface to *Ariel, ou La Vie de Shelley*], on pp. i–ii ; "Le biographe et ses personnages: vérité et poésie" [as in I, note 20], p. 6). He held a somewhat similar view of Cecil Rhodes.

7 Virginia Woolf, "The New Biography," *New York Herald Tribune*, 30 October 1927, reprinted in *Granite and Rainbow* [London: Hogarth Press, 1958], pp. 149–155.

8 "Remarques d'André Maurois," following the chapter "L'Art du biographe" in Jacques Suffel, *André Maurois, avec des remarques par André Maurois* [as in I, note 15], p. 96. Maurois was adamant about the biographer's obligation to study all available sources, document himself thoroughly, never, on any account, invent history, and stick to chronological sequence as closely as possible ("The Modern Biographer," *Yale Review*, new series, 10, 1 (1927): 227–245, at pp. 237, 242–243; *Aspects of Biography*, chapters 1–3). Unlike Strachey, who "used no unpublished sources and provided no references" (Michael Holroyd, *Lytton Strachey* [New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994], p. 424), Maurois made it a habit, beginning with the biography of Disraeli, to provide a comprehensive list of his sources at the beginning or the end of the volume. He not infrequently consulted manuscript sources and conducted interviews.

9 On the salon of Mme Arman-Caillavet, see *Le Salon de Madame Arman de Caillavet* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1926; Engl. trans., with a useful index, *The Last Salon* [New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1927), by Jeanne Pouquet, Mme Arman's daughter-in-law and the mother of Maurois' second wife, Simone de Caillavet; also George D. Painter, *Marcel Proust: A Biography* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978; orig. London: Chatto & Windus, 1959), vol. 1, pp. 65–68. On Simone de Caillavet as Mlle de Saint-Loup, see Painter, *Marcel Proust*, pp. 178–179.

10 *Aspects of Biography*, p. 110.

11 *Choses nues*, pp. 134–135. On Blum's reputation as an elegant man-about-town and refined essayist, see the somewhat malicious pages in Jacques-Émile Blanche, *More Portraits of a Lifetime* (as in I, note 13), pp. 309–310; on Blum as editor of the *Revue blanche*, see Paul-Henri Bourrelier, *La Revue blanche* (Paris: Fayard, 2007), pp. 144–169 *et passim*. Blum's *Stendhal et le beylisme*, published in 1914, went through many editions. The 152nd edition of *Du Mariage*, first published in 1907, came out in 1947. Blum's *Correspondance*

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0006

with Gide (1890–1950), ed. Pierre Lachasse, appeared with the Presses Universitaires de Lyon in 2011. In the very earliest of the letters (1890) the two men were already using the familiar "tu" form to address each other. Though certainly not a Socialist in 1937, Maurois had been attracted to socialism when a student of Alain's at the lycée in Rouen, had been interested in the movement to set up the so-called *universités populaires* and had given lectures at such institutions in Elbeuf and Rouen. The experience of managing the family firm in the early 1920s, however, deepened his basic suspicion of rigid ideologies and soon led him to view the socialist understanding of social and economic problems as too simple and one-sided (see Frédéric Lefèvre, *Une Heure avec* [as in note 3 above], p. 18).

12 *Memoirs 1885–1967*, p. 181.

13 *Choses nues*, p. 16.

14 "I am delighted by Maurois' Disraeli," Churchill wrote to "Clemmy" (his wife Clementine) on 1 October 1927 (Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, vol. 5 [Companion], part 1 [Documents]: "The Exchequer Years 1922–1929" [London: Heinemann, 1979], p. 1059).

15 On the meeting with Churchill and later with Attlee, see *Choses nues*, pp. 86–87, 109, 140. The account of the meeting with Churchill appeared in the first of five articles entitled "What Happened to France" in *Collier's Weekly*, 24 August–21 September 1940, on p. 9. These articles were republished in book form, with a concluding sixth chapter, as *Tragedy in France,* trans. Denver Lindley (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1940; orig. *Tragédie en France* [New York: Éditions de la Maison Française, 1940]); the Churchill meeting is described on pp. 3–4. Maurois' admiring portrait of Churchill appeared in English in *The Living Age: The World in Review* (founded in 1844, closed down in 1941), vol. 351, no. 4444 (January 1937): 413–415. Churchill was again presented in an extremely favourable light and his strength and determination contrasted with the suspicion in traditional British conservative circles of his "dictatorial" tendencies and "hot-headedness" in a review of Clare Boothe's *Europe in the Spring* (New York: Knopf, 1940) in *The Saturday Review* (14 September 1940, p. 5). Maurois' review of a biography of Churchill by René Krauss (Philadelphia: Lipincott, 1940), also in *The Saturday Review* (9 November 1940, p. 6), was no less admiring of the man. As late as 1962, Churchill was again portrayed with admiration and affection in Maurois' part—a history of the USA from Wilson to Kennedy, with many pages devoted to World War II—of a four-volume *Histoire parallèle* of the USSR and the USA, written in collaboration with the poet Louis Aragon.

16 *Les Silences du Colonel Bramble*, in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 1, p. 17; *The Silence of Colonel Bramble*, trans. Thurfrida Wake (London: The Bodley Head; New York: John Lane, 1920), p. 30.

17 *Aspects of Biography*, p. 7.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0006

18 "A Holiday Diary 1928," in *A Private Universe* (as in note 2 above), pp. 28–29; the conversation with Kipling was reproduced—as often happens with Maurois—in other works, such as *Mes songes que voici* (Paris: Grasset, 1933) and *Poésie et Action: Choix de Textes* (Strasbourg and Paris: Éditions F.-X. Leroux, 1949), pp. 131–133.

19 *Nouvelles directions de la littérature française* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 1.

20 *Memoirs 1885–1967*, p. 411.

21 Introduction to the French translation of *Mrs. Dalloway*, reproduced in Virginia Woolf, *L'Oeuvre romanesque*, 3 vols (Paris: Stock, 1973), vol. 1, pp. 169–173; on Gertrude Stein, see Maurois, *Études américaines* (New York: Éditions de la Maison Française, 1945), pp. 9–19; Céline, Maurois declared, was "a new writer of great talent," and the novel, "while not a masterpiece" was "very strange and very original" (cited in *New York Times*, 22 April 1934).

22 André Maurois, *The Edwardian Era*, trans. Hamish Miles (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1933), pp. 126, 228–229.

23 "The Absolute in the Relative," in *A Private Universe* (as in note 2 above), pp. 124–125. In general, Maurois wrote elsewhere, "monologue was not my strong point. In my novels as in my essays, I am instinctively drawn to dialogue. I have an overriding need to be impartial, to clarify, revise, entertain second thoughts. Dialogue lends itself to this. It rarely happens to me that an idea or a judgment of a situation or an individual does not provoke a response within me. I *am* in turn each of the speakers I present. But that does not imply a lack of will. A moment of decision comes, when the exchange of views must cease, and one must act. *Up to that point*, however, methodical doubt and dialogue, 'the two lobes of my brain.'" (*Portrait d'un ami qui s'appelait moi* [Namur and Paris: Wesmael-Charlier, 1959], pp. 109–110)

24 Maurois' emphasis on the expressive aspect of biography was probably his most original contribution to the discussion of the "new biography." "Biography," he had declared in *Aspects of Biography*, "is a means of expression when the biographer has chosen his subject in order to respond to a secret need in his own nature. It will be written with more natural emotion than other kinds of biography, because the feelings and adventures of the hero will be the medium of the biographer's own feelings; to a certain extent it will be autobiography disguised as biography" (p. 111). At the same time, the expressive function of biography, as of fiction, is accompanied for both the writer and the reader by a therapeutic one. The biographer's initial empathy, even identification with his subject is complemented, according to Maurois, by the establishment of a necessary distance from his subject and this allows him both to express himself through his subject and to objectivize and gain understanding and control of troubling aspects of his own subjectivity. See also Maurois, "The Modern Biographer," *Yale Review*, 17, 1 (1927), pp. 238–239.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0006

25 Cited on back cover of a resissue of Nicolson's *Some People* (New York: Atheneum, 1982).

26 Cited on back cover of Nicolson's novel *Public Faces* (London: Constable, 1932).

27 Maurois on Nicolson in *Tragedy in France* (as in note 15 above), p. 140; Nicolson on Maurois in *New York Times*, 28 May 1961, review of English translation of Maurois' *Adrienne: The Life of the Marquise de La Fayette*.

28 Maurois, *Études américaines*, pp. 80–81.

29 Letter from Maurois to Nicolson, 18 April 1934, Princeton University, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Harold Nicolson Papers, series 2, box 2, folder 10. In 1934 Maurois joined the editorial board of *Le Figaro*, along with Paul Morand and the writer-diplomat Wladimir d'Ormesson (Jacques de Lacretelle, *Face à l'événement: Le Figaro 1826–1966* [Paris: Hachette, 1966], p. 159).

30 Letter from Maurois to Nicolson, 3 July 1940, Princeton University, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections (as in note 29 above); Maurois, *Memoirs 1885–1967*, p. 265. In his broad sympathies, Maurois had a similar affinity with Desmond MacCarthy with whom he was also on friendly terms and who, like Nicolson, was close to the Bloomsbury group. "His relation to Bloomsbury was rather peculiar," Cyril Connolly wrote of MacCarthy. "They had difficulty forgiving his catholicity of taste; it seemed incomprehensible to them that he could like so many of the same things, [. . .] while finding so much sympathy for their opposites" ("A Portrait" in Desmond MacCarthy, *Memories* [as in I, note 15], pp. 9–15, on p. 13). MacCarthy himself, however, insisted that " 'Bloomsbury' is neither a movement nor a push [defined as 'a mutual admiration society'—LG], but only a group of old friends. [. . .] In taste and judgment 'Bloomsbury' from the start has been at variance with itself. Indeed, here lay its charm as a social circle. There was enough mutual respect and affection, well tested by time, to supply cement; enough difference of temperament and opinion to stimulate talk; enough intellectual honesty to enable them to learn from each other" ("Bloomsbury, An Unfinished Memoir," ibid., pp. 172–173). Such a milieu must have suited Maurois to a T.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0006

IV The Mission of Reconciliation

Abstract: *By his own account, reconciliation, avoidance of destructive conflicts, was a dominant theme of all Maurois writing. This meant, in his novels, presenting the point of view of workers and employers, of different generations, of the male and the female partner in love relationships; in his biographies, reconciling the faithfulness to fact of the historian and the art of the story-teller. In politics, Maurois' unwillingness to take sides in what he viewed as a baleful opposition led, in 1940, to his refusing to choose between de Gaulle and Pétain and, despite his Jewish background, to a reputation as a Vichy sympathizer.*

Gossman, Lionel. *André Maurois (1885–1967): Fortunes and Misfortunes of a Moderate*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0007.

Looking back on his work in the early 1940s, Maurois was "struck," he wrote, "by the predominance in my books of the theme of Reconciliation. *Bramble* was an effort to make the French understand the English soul; the English the French soul; *Bernard Quesnay* was an effort to show that good faith is to be found on the employers' side as well as on that of the workers; *Climats* was an effort to present fairly the woman's point of view and the man's point of view in a marriage; *Le Cercle de famille* was an effort to reconcile the generations."[1] To this list of four of his novels could be added most of Maurois' biographies and essays on political and economic topics as well as his contributions to the lively international debate in the 1920s and 1930s about the "new biography," inasmuch as in the face of much scepticism on the part not only of professional historians but of some of the practitioners of the "new biography" themselves, he insisted on the possibility of reconciling what Virginia Woolf had termed the "granite" of truth and the "rainbow" of imagination and art. In the pessimistic view of Harold Nicolson, albeit himself a champion and practitioner of the "new biography," "the scientific interest in biography is hostile to, and will in the end prove destructive of, the literary interest. The former will insist not only on the facts, but on all the facts; the latter demands a partial or artificial representation of facts." Virginia Woolf concluded her *New York Herald Tribune* article of 30 October 1927 on "The New Biography" on a similarly pessimistic note: "Truth of fact and truth of fiction are incompatible; yet [the biographer] is now more than ever urged to combine them." Not surprisingly, "the biographer whose art is subtle and bold enough to present that queer amalgamation of dream and reality, that perpetual marriage of granite and rainbow" cannot be named. "His method still remains to be discovered."[2]

In the face of such scepticism on the part of his friends, Maurois maintained in his *Aspects of Biography* of the following year that "art and science can be reconciled.[…] A beautiful portrait is at once a portrait resembling its subject and an artistic transference of reality. It is perfectly accurate to say that truth has the solidity of stone and that personality has the lightness of a rainbow; but Rodin and the Greek sculptors before him have at times been able to infuse into marble the elusive curves and the changing lights of human flesh." In an article on "Le Biographe et ses personnages," written four decades later in 1967, just before he died, Maurois reaffirmed his confidence in the biographer's ability to reconcile "vérité et poésie."[3] Similarly, in his 1948 overview of the work of the painter David, he had argued that David's portraits, rather than

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0007

the grand constructions *à l'antique* to which he constantly aspired, are the most authentic expression of his genius as an artist, inasmuch as they give form to his deep insight into the character and psychology of his subjects. "In spite of appearances," in spite of his commitment to grand and idealized constructions, David, in fact, "brought the French back to that realism that is their true nature.[. . .] From Clouet to David and from David to Degas, the line is unbroken." In his praise of David's realism and of the realism he considered the hallmark of French art Maurois expressed his own conviction that "truth" and "art," "granite" and "rainbow" are not irreconcilable; that is, his conviction that through "simplicity of composition, without exaggeration," the artist—be she painter, novelist, or biographer—can and should communicate "the unvarnished, unsentimentalized truth," the essential nature of individuals and situations.[4]

Reconciliation had already been the goal of the early *Dialogues sur le commandement* (1924; Engl. trans. *Captains and Kings. Three Dialogues on Leadership*, 1925) in which, in the difficult aftermath of World War I, Maurois presented an army lieutenant and a philosopher discussing their opposing views about the best form of the state and about the qualities required of its leaders. Essentially the little book consists of a debate about leadership and democracy in government, about practicality as opposed to principle, about order and discipline as opposed to freedom and justice. In the preface he wrote for a post-World War II re-edition of the work (1949), Maurois went to some pains to point out that he himself embraced both positions. The dialogues, he said, were "conversations in which, as Renan once put it, the two lobes of my brain confronted and completed each other. It is me talking to myself."[5] As the author of *Colonel Bramble* had served in the army and as his close relationship with the philosopher Alain was well known, however, it was assumed by many in the 1920s and 1930s (wrongly, Maurois insisted) that the army lieutenant, the champion of the practical, of action, order, decisiveness and strong leadership, represented Maurois' own views—the views of the "Practical Man," as Alain had already dubbed him—and the philosopher, the champion of ideas and principles, of Freedom, Justice and Democracy, those of Alain, the "Just Man."

That reading of his *Dialogues* may help to explain why Maurois' openness to divergent points of view, his disinclination to come down unequivocally on one side or another of an issue aroused mistrust in some of his contemporaries. In 1933, for instance, on the occasion of a speech

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0007

given by Thomas Mann in Paris, Romain Rolland voiced quite strong reservations about Maurois (who, it should be said, seems never to have had anything but the highest regard for Rolland, both as a man and as a writer). As Mann had just left Nazi Germany to begin what turned out to be a long period of exile, Rolland expressed surprise in a letter to Stefan Zweig that he was "letting himself be praised, fêted and shown around Paris by phony 'liberals' and reactionaries in disguise, whose spokesman is André Maurois."[6] Even in Princeton, where Maurois had been a huge success with the students in 1930–1931, he was castigated a few years later by a principled, left-leaning undergraduate for his "fuzzy talking about peace" and his unwillingness or inability to delve into uncomfortable and disturbing depths in an article he had published in the *New York Times* in 1934. "Restating a couple of dozen polite platitudes about 'the hearts of men,'" the student objected in a letter to the *Daily Princetonian*, Maurois had failed to discern or to acknowledge "the central cause of war—the inequitable distribution of income under the present economic system, which forces each nation to seek desperately for foreign markets for its unconsumed surplus. Failure in this causes depression, and creates a psychological background for assumption of national control by jingoes and munitions interests, either under fascism or democracy."[7]

Maurois' aversion to system and dogmatism was certainly deep and sustained. "I am suspicious of abstract, universal ideas, disconnected from time and place," he had told a journalist interviewing him in the early 1930s.[8] "It is confused thinking," he had already declared in an essay on "Economic Relativity," dating from the time of the great Depression,

> to set up individualism against socialism, capitalism against communism, as if one were dealing with clear concepts with well-defined outlines, whereas the reality is complex and shifting, and historical evolution makes human societies oscillate between one system and the other, without being able to stop at either. If our epoch is capable of contributing an original philosophy, it is one of absolute relativity. It is not immoral to be a capitalist, it is not criminal to be a communist; but it would be intelligent to admit that every doctrine is baneful if it is rigid. There is no such thing as economic truth; or rather, every moment has its own economic truth. Just as the scientist adjusts an hypothesis to take account of his experiment, or as the wise military leader accepts the lesson of hard fact, so the economic rulers should hold a doctrine only for the provisional co-ordination of their actions. Capitalism is capable of fashioning the economy of a revolution, and I should like it to do so. But only a process of self-transformation will save it.[9]

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0007

"As soon as a man starts looking for the last word about things, madness is not far off," he wrote later in an essay on Heinrich von Kleist. "Our human condition is more humble and there are no last words."[10]

It is by no means surprising that Maurois was a reader and admirer of Bertrand Russell. In a diary entry for 14 August 1928, he notes that reading Russell always gave him "keen pleasure" and that he was particularly taken by an essay of Russell's he had just read "on the necessity of political scepticism."[11] He goes on to present approvingly, in his own words, the gist of Russell's argument concerning "what is to be done" to fix the problems that beset modern liberal-democratic societies, albeit with a characteristic appreciation, not present in Russell's essay, of the past usefulness of the system now deemed obsolete and destructive:

> It is certain that modern societies are feeling an urgent need to alter their mode of government. For over two hundred years politics has been based on sentiments (envy or hatred) which have had their uses in the struggle against classes that were too powerful and too sure of themselves, but are becoming dangerous in a great industrial society, for this society can live only by the co-operation of all its citizens. The life of a great capital like Paris, London or New York, is a miracle, sustained only by the very unstable equilibrium set up by the efforts of hundreds of varied organisms.[. . .] The War proved the possibility of abandoning [the political methods, which at the present time have become absurd,] of inciting the proletariat against the ruling classes and the ruling classes against the proletariat. [. . .] During the War, confronted by a common foe, every country managed to attain, with no alloy of hatred, a marvellously effective national socialism.[12]

By that last term, Maurois meant in effect a resolution of class conflict by means of which justice and well-being had been secured for the working class within an economic system that did not require the elimination of capitalism—something that could be close either to the corporate state or to what is now usually referred to as social democracy. Surprisingly, he did not quote one remark of Russell's that must assuredly have aroused a strong positive response in him: "A well-intentioned person who believes in any strong political movement is merely helping to prolong that organised strife which is destroying our civilisation. Of course I do not lay this down as an absolute rule: we must be sceptical even of our scepticism."[13]

Maurois' intellectual restraint, his acute awareness of the random and the contingent—a collection of short stories published in the United States in 1943 carries the title *Toujours l'inattendu arrive* ["The

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0007

Unexpected always Happens"]—could, however, as his critics charged, lead him to shirk deeply probing analysis and difficult partisan choices, even though he himself insisted on the human need and obligation to seek out patterns of apparent order and to pursue an unattainable predictability. In retrospect, his empirically based scepticism and emphasis on the aleatory, the unforeseen and unforeseeable might seem in a few instances almost culpably facile. In 1935, for example, as the political situation in Europe was growing ever more tense and threatening, he published an article in the English journal *The Fortnightly*, in which he reports or imagines the worried views of various statesmen on the troubling issues of the day—the Polish Corridor, the burden of indebtedness to the United States of the World War I allies, the question of German reparations, Hitler's rise to power in Germany—only to conclude on Talleyrand's remark "in a situation that also seemed desperate: *'Tout cela s'arrangera.'* " When asked "How?", Talleyrand's reply, according to Maurois, was "By chance." This reply serves as the occasion for an argument in favour of a kind of attentive scepticism or, as Maurois would have it, "realism":

> Chance is the most intelligent of negotiators. It is true that in evading the old dangers it sometimes shapes new combinations which are not less to be dreaded. But these combinations will themselves be fragile, and the true statesman is he who refuses to cloud the serenity of his judgment by vain and melancholy speculations on an unknown future. [...] Let us waste no time, therefore, in calculating the events of a distant future, but gird ourselves to face them as they arise, whatever they may be. Pessimism is feebleness, optimism the fault of the naïve; the wise man is a realist and lives in the present. Let us never forget that most of the anxieties which keep us awake at nights in 1935 will seem to us, in 1938, ridiculous fancies.[14]

Shortly after the defeat of France, Maurois again seemed to want to avoid making an unequivocal decision. This time his unwillingness to come down clearly and unambiguously on the side of de Gaulle and his subsequent attempts to win some understanding for Pétain had serious consequences for him as he came to be looked upon with open mistrust and hostility by those who had taken a firmer stand. While committed to carrying on the struggle against Nazi Germany, he declined an invitation from General de Gaulle to join his planned *Comité national* in London in the summer of 1940. "I am Jewish, my family is in France, they are industrialists, I can't ruin them," he is reported to have told Geoffroy de Courcel, de Gaulle's aide, who solicited his support on behalf of the

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0007

General.[15] His mother, his daughter Michelle and his sons Gérald and Olivier were indeed still in France. His refusal may also, however, have been motivated by less personal considerations. Conceivably he regarded de Gaulle as a divisive figure at a time when it was more than ever desirable, in his view, not to embrace extremes, not to side with one leader rather than another, not to set one group of French men and women against another, and not to disengage completely from those who had had to stay in France and suffer the consequences of the debacle. De Gaulle's "plans created a distressing question of conscience for many Frenchmen," he wrote later that year in a book published in the United States. "Some believed the thing to do, first of all, in the hour of our country's agony, was *to maintain the unity of France* [in italics in the text]; others refused to recognize the Armistice and joined General de Gaulle."[16]

For his part, Maurois left London for the United States, where he had been scheduled to deliver the Lowell lectures in Boston, in the hope, he claimed, of explaining the reasons for France's defeat, restoring respect and affection for his country in the US, and ultimately persuading the Americans that only their entry, at the right moment, into the war against Nazi Germany would ensure the defence of England, the liberation of France, and the survival of the liberal and humane civilization all three countries stood for. His position thus appears to have been not too far removed from that attributed by their apologists to Pétain and his Minister of Defence Weygand: only the Americans could liberate France and restore her to her place among the great nations, for the British were weak and would probably be defeated. This view of the likely outcome of the war between Britain and Germany was shared not only by US Ambassador Joseph Kennedy and by opinion in many parts of the world but even at times by strong American supporters of Britain, such as the CBS correspondent Eric Sevareid, Roosevelt's adviser Harry Hopkins and his special envoy Averell Harriman, when the aid they were urging Roosevelt to provide to the British seemed to be too slowly and grudgingly or not at all forthcoming. Churchill himself warned Roosevelt at the end of 1940 that if British shipping losses continued at their current rate, they would prove "fatal."[17]

In the short run, Maurois seems to have thought maintaining relations with the Vichy regime as the current form of the French state, rather than breaking completely with it or even waging war against it and thus forcing it into active collaboration with Hitler was the wiser course of action, militarily as well as politically. This, it will be recalled, was a view

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0007

shared by influential figures in the US State Department. Even Churchill, it has been claimed, was willing to enter into secret negotiations with Pétain, with a view to ensuring that France would not cooperate with the Germans and would retain control of her fleet and her overseas territories.[18] While recognizing the vital importance for the British of preventing the French fleet from falling into German hands, Maurois was deeply distressed by the Royal Navy's action at Mers el-Kebir in July 1940, on direct orders from Churchill. "A Frenchman first of all but for twenty years a friend of England," he wrote, "I was like a child of divorced parents who stays with his mother but who suffers nevertheless. My heart said: 'My country right or wrong.' My reason deplored this break between two peoples who have so much need of each other."[19]

On a personal level too, Maurois was doubtless reluctant to rush to a negative judgment of Pétain. Pétain had been present at the dinner party to which Simone, eager to meet an upcoming writer, had invited Maurois in December 1924 and Maurois had worked with him since 1935 as administrator of the French Information Center for the United States [*Office français de renseignements aux États-Unis*], a privately established and financed agency for promoting Franco-American understanding, which Pétain had helped to set up and of which he had been appointed president.[20] Though he must have known of Pétain's contempt for parliamentary government, links to right-wing political groups, and admiration for the dictator Primo de Rivera in Spain (but perhaps not of Pétain's privately expressed view of England as having "always been France's most implacable enemy"), Maurois later claimed to remember him from that pre-war association as above all "friendly, exacting, punctual and precise." Many years before, in the *Dialogues sur le commandement* of 1924, the two interlocutors—the young army officer who favoured social order under a strong, pragmatic leader and the philosopher to whom freedom and principle were priorities—had been able to agree on the virtues of one man: Pétain.[21] Maurois had also not forgotten that in the late 1930s the Marshal had encouraged him to present himself as a candidate for election to the Académie Française and had intervened to reprove the novelist and historian Louis Bertrand, one of the so-called Immortals, when Bertrand objected to the election of a Jew to the august body.[22] Perhaps also he still remembered a thought from one of his beloved Alain's *Propos*: "In almost everything there are some grounds for praise; for we never know the real motives and so what does it cost to suppose moderation rather than cowardice, friendship rather than prudence?"[23]

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0007

It was never Maurois' style to make blanket condemnations or encourage irreconcilable hostilities. In a short additional chapter he wrote for a 1947 re-edition of his 1931 biography of Lyautey, for example, he maintained a characteristically discreet silence on Lyautey's flirtation with extreme right-wing politics in the years preceding his death in 1934. Similarly in the revision of his *Memoirs*, on which he worked well after the war and after the trial and condemnation of Pétain, he did not alter what he had earlier written of the Marshal and he refrained from engaging in the continuing, acrimonious debate about Vichy.[24]

Maurois' view, as he laid it out in a passionate appeal for understanding of France's current situation that appeared in *Life* magazine (6 January 1941), was essentially that Pétain was a sincere patriot who had rendered important services to France in the past and who had had to make the best of a catastrophic situation created in large measure by two decades of poor decision making by Britain and France, by lack of understanding and cooperation between the two allies, by the failure of both, as well as the United States, to modernize their armies and air forces and maintain them at adequate levels of strength and readiness, and by a bad military strategy in 1939–1940.[25] In addition, like many Frenchmen he had been distressed by the inability or, as was not infrequently suggested, unwillingness of the British to devote greater military resources to the defence of France. "Black news. French apparently withdrawing but only guarded news. Maurois begging for help last night," Virginia Woolf recorded in her diary for 12 June 1940.[26] It is important to note, however, that by outlining concrete and practical grounds for France's defeat, Maurois implicitly rejected the view propagated by Vichy, by Pétain himself, and by politicians on the Right in general, that it had been caused by the internal moral failure of the democratic Third Republic.

Maurois' position in 1940 is hinted at in his farewell letter to Harold Nicolson:

> My dear Nicolson: I want to say good-bye to you and also to thank you. In circumstances that made any action difficult for all of us, you demonstrated great generosity and understanding. I hope, with all my heart, to be able to be of some service to both our countries in the United States and perhaps also in Canada, for I still believe that their true interests are the same. I will not do so flamboyantly for the reasons that you know, but I will try to do so efficaciously. In the meantime, I would like you to know that my affection for England and my admiration of it have been strengthened by my stay there in the most terrible time of my life. Affectionately, André Maurois.[27]

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0007

In fact, few of the prominent French personalities in London in 1940 on whom de Gaulle had optimistically counted to support his projected French National Committee actually did so. "In June 1940," as one of the General's backers observed bitterly, "London was not a town you came to but one from which you departed," some to return to their posts and their families in France, some to move on to the US.[28] In New York the French émigrés were divided. While most rallied around de Gaulle, a few, without being pro-Vichy, were decidedly suspicious of or unconvinced by the General—among them the poet and diplomat Saint-John Perse (Alexis Léger), the philosopher Jacques Maritain, who is said to have told Raoul Aglion, de Gaulle's representative in Washington, that he would have nothing to do with a "new Bonaparte experience," and the aviator-novelist Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, an old friend from Pontigny with whom Maurois and his wife established an especially close relationship in their American exile. The willingness of a public figure as well known as Maurois to consider Vichy, however regretfully, still representative of France was viewed with dismay and anger by the New York Gaullists, especially after the publication of the prominently featured article in *Life* magazine. One in particular, the dramatist Henry Bernstein, mounted a campaign against Maurois, accusing him of being a Vichy sympathizer, a racist, an anti-Semitic Jew, a fascist, and—to boot—anti-British.[29] Even old friendships, such as that with Jules Romains, who had become a committed Gaullist, came under some strain after Maurois' public appeal, in the *Life* magazine article, for understanding of Pétain and of the decision to seek an armistice with Germany. "Without any doubt the invasion of France by Hitler's armies had deeply upset Maurois," Romains readily conceded, "[. . .] but he had no intention of quarrelling with the Pétain regime." Consequently, he, Romains, never attempted "to influence him or involve him in our work of resistance from abroad. Associating him with that activity would in any case have required overcoming the serious misgivings, where he was concerned, of the French of 'France Forever' and 'Free France.' "[30] The truth of the matter appears to be that Maurois was genuinely torn. On the one hand, there was his deep desire, in his own words, "to defend French culture, the memory of our dead, the honor of our army and above all the French children and the French prisoners who had such great need of aid from America." On the other hand, there was Vichy's promulgation, albeit "under pressure from the invader," of the anti-Jewish laws of 3 and 4 October 1940 and June–September, 1941 excluding Jews from various public offices and

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0007

setting quotas for them in nearly all professions—"liberal, commercial, industrial, or artisanal." This, Maurois conceded, by "striking Frenchmen of long standing, excellent citizens, combatants in two wars"—that is, people like himself—"posed a painful problem of conscience."[31]

The view of Maurois as sympathetic to Vichy appears to have spread to England. Even Nicolson referred, in one of the "Marginal Comments" that he wrote regularly between 1941 and 1944 for the weekly magazine *The Spectator*, to the "defection of André Maurois." "It may well be," he wrote on 27 November 1942 (hence after the landings in North Africa),

> that André Maurois, following the example of Pucheu, Peyrouton and Darlan,[32] may now seek to explain away the things he said about us at the time of our misfortunes, and may contend that his criticisms were due to nothing more than the anxious solicitude of a devoted friend. I am prepared to believe that when in those dark months of 1940 he reached America (having escaped from both France and England) his main desire was to defend the reputation of his own country and army, even at the cost of other loyalties; I admit that the things he then said and wrote do not appear, on subsequent examination, to have been as unfaithful as they seemed at first; yet I regret that a man whose literary and academic repute was so largely based upon his appreciation of the British character should not have affirmed more stoutly his faith in us at the most glorious moment of our history. People like Eve Curie and Henri Bernstein were under no intellectual or spiritual obligation to Great Britain, yet they espoused our cause with ardent faith; compared to the Vichy-hôpital of André Maurois their enthusiasm was as champagne. I am sorry about André Maurois, since he was a man of ability and charm.[33]

Nicolson went on to compare Maurois unfavourably with the painter and writer Jacques-Émile Blanche whom he had known since 1919 and with whom, in the Spring of 1935, he had been invited by the Maurois themselves to lunch. Famous at the time for his portraits of just about every leading author in France and England in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as for scenes of London, Brighton and Dieppe, Blanche was as much at home in cultivated circles in London and the South of England as in Paris and enjoyed the friendship of the many English and American writers and artists who had sat for portraits by him: Thomas Hardy, Henry James, James Joyce, George Moore, Edith Wharton, Oscar Wilde, Virginia Woolf, Max Beerbohm, John Rothenstein, John Sargent, Walter Sickert, James McNeill Whistler. Sorry as he was about Maurois, Nicolson wrote, "I am even more saddened by

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0007

the death of Jacques-Émile Blanche. Blanche's understanding of us was wider, deeper, and of far longer duration than that of Maurois."[34]

Pétain himself, it has been claimed, appreciated Maurois' loyalty to him. In a diary entry for 2 July 1943, Simone de Caillavet's mother, Jeanne Maurice Pouquet—a strong Vichy sympathizer who remained in France throughout the war, lost no opportunity of expressing her dislike of the English and the Americans, and considered Maurois' *Tragédie en France* "a masterpiece"—reported on a conversation she had been told about by her husband's close friend General André Wateau, one of the two military justices appointed by Pétain to preside over the notorious Riom trial in 1940 (and Simone de Caillavet's legal adviser at the time of her divorce from her first husband, the Romanian diplomat Georges Stoïesco). According to Wateau, at dinner one evening with Pétain himself, the latter's doctor Bernard Ménétrel and another friend of the Marshal's, the official navy painter Maurice Moisset, Ménétrel mentioned having heard that Maurois had arrived in North Africa. Wateau replied that he had no confirmation of that and was not at all sure of it. Moisset intervened to say that "in any case, if it is true, one can be sure Maurois acted out of the conviction that it was his duty and that he might be serving the cause of France. Maurois cannot be suspected of any mean feeling, any calculation of self-interest or trying to further personal political ambition. He will always be remembered as a conscientious historian, a highly talented individual and an *honnête homme*." Pétain agreed. "I am aware of everything he has done for France and for me since arriving in America and of all the difficulties he ran up against because of that. I will not forget it."[35]

According to the author of Maurois' obituary in *The Times* of London (10 October 1967), the feelings aroused by the stance the writer adopted in 1940–1942 "did him no great credit in the eyes of many Frenchmen" and may have contributed to a decline in his popularity after the war. Even a good friend, the novelist Roger Martin du Gard, who had remained in France, wondered in late 1941, in a letter to another close friend of Maurois', the daughter of the founder of the Pontigny "Décades," whether "André, our distant friend, really knows what is going on in France and what people here are thinking.[. . .] I am afraid that he may have allowed himself to go too far, that he may have become too willing to be trusting and indulgent," and may have let "the unpleasant attitude of some émigrés distort his judgment of the good cause they are defending and take the opposite point of view."[36] While attempting to put in a good word for

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0007

Maurois with de Gaulle in Algiers in the summer of 1943, Gide confessed in the pages of his private journal that "after having seen Maurois again," he was less than sure "that my arguments were all valid."[37]

From Maurois' own perspective, he was above all a French patriot and that meant, for him, rejecting the necessity of choosing between de Gaulle and Pétain. His position appears to have been similar to that of Louis Rougier, the philosophy professor who attempted to mediate secretly between Vichy and the British in order, he claimed, to facilitate France's continuing the struggle against Germany covertly, after the armistice. On Rougier's arrival in New York, Maurois met with him and later recorded in his *Memoirs* that Rougier had communicated his "impression that Pétain was playing a double game, only yielding on certain points in order to prepare for future re-entry into the war"—an impression Maurois "hoped was true." As Rougier reports on the situation in New York,

> those who were unfortunate enough to claim that France had not betrayed anyone, would not give up her bases to the Germans, would scuttle her fleet rather than hand it over, were called collaborators, Vichy supporters, Nazis. The logic of alternatives, which distorts everything by simplifying everything, required that one declare oneself Pétainist or Gaullist, whereas one felt simply that one was French. Laying claim to the proud title of French was denounced as an evasion. You would be asked by earnest young men working for an intelligence agency keeping tabs on foreign exiles in the United States, "Which leader are you for?"—as though the only proper response of a democrat did not have to be: "I am not for any leader. I am for the Constitution and for respecting the law."[38]

Whatever the judgment of Maurois' position in 1940–1941, his inclination to avoid stark alternatives and seek instead negotiated compromises seems to have been deeply ingrained in his temperament. In the early 1930s he had recommended reading up on the negotiations that led to the Entente Cordiale in 1904, as he himself had just done. "I believe these negotiations constitute an admirable example of the way two peoples, who seemed hostile to each other and two points of view that seemed contradictory, could be brought closer to each other." After the end of the European war, in 1946, he met the Minister of France Overseas at a lunch. "At this time he is carrying on a difficult negotiation with Ho Chi Minh," Maurois recounted later in his *Memoirs*. " 'Reach an agreement,' I tell him. 'In a distant and mysterious affair of this sort, surrounded by dangers, the worst of compromises is better than the best of wars.' "[39]

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0007

And in 1962, at the height of the Cold War—as noted earlier—he collaborated with the poet Louis Aragon, then still a card-carrying member of the French Communist Party, albeit increasingly critical of Soviet totalitarianism, on a four-volume *Histoire Parallèle* of the USSR and the USA. Aragon contributed two volumes on the history of the USSR from 1917 to 1960; the third consisted of Maurois' *Histoire des États-Unis de 1917 à 1961* (published in English in 1964 in London as *A History of the USA from Wilson to Kennedy* and in New York as *From the New Freedom to the New Frontier: A History of the United States from 1912 to the Present*); the fourth was a composite volume made up of interviews by Maurois with twenty-one notable Americans in fields ranging from economics and education to medicine, the trades unions and the arts, and reports by Aragon of encounters with similar figures in the USSR. The aim of both Maurois and himself, according to Aragon, was to establish a parallel history, not a comparative one, thus avoiding those "Shakespearean dialogues" that are "generally the prelude to a war, between France and England, for example." Both the USA and the USSR, Aragon explained in an introductory note to his part of volume IV, are characterized—on good grounds—by enormous "national pride." But, "I have not used up two and a half years of my life just to provide an occasion for verbal conflict; if I undertook this task, it is because I believed in the power of truth and of honesty in history to produce better understanding. In a word, because I was passionately convinced that peace is possible." Maurois' collaboration with Aragon—whom he admired as a poet, but whose politics he obviously did not share—was itself an expression of that same conviction and, more generally, of an enduring commitment in all his writing to coexistence and reconciliation.[40] Both in his fictional and in his non-fictional work, reconciliation meant, for Maurois, not effacing differences but, on the contrary, learning to acknowledge them, live with them, and adapt to them, learning to understand the other's point of view. It meant, in short, recognizing the inevitability and even the value of parallel histories, parallel lives, peaceful coexistence, instead of pursuing a unity and uniformity realizable only by violence and oppression.

Notes

1 *Memoirs 1885–1967*, p. 217. See also Michel Droit, *André Maurois* (Paris: Éditions universitaires, 1953), p. 92: "Comprendre et faire comprendre,

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0007

concilier et réconcilier, sont parmi les soucis les plus permanents de l'oeuvre de Maurois. Le thème de réconciliation s'y trouve constamment" ["Achieving understanding and encouraging understanding in others, conciliating and reconciling, are among the most enduring concerns of Maurois' work. The theme of reconciliation recurs in it constantly"].

2 Nicolson, *The Development of English Biography* (London: Hogarth Press, 1927), p. 154; Woolf, *Granite and Rainbow* (as in I, note 4), p. 155.

3 *Aspects of Biography*, p. 34; "Le biographe et ses personnages: vérité et poésie" (as in I, note 20), pp. 5–19.

4 André Maurois, Introductory essay "David, ou le génie malgré lui" in *J.-L. David* (Paris: Éditions du dimanche, 1948), pp. 1–17. See also Maurois' short essay on Fernand Léger in his *Mon ami Léger* (Paris: Louis Carré, 1952), pp. 9–27.

5 *Dialogues sur le commandement*, "Préface pour l'édition de 1949," in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 5, pp. 3–4. It has also been suggested that the *Dialogues* represent Maurois' attempt to reconcile two of his heroes: Kipling and Alain (Francis Léaud, *La Poétique de Rudyard Kipling* [Paris: Didier, n.d.—1958], p. 143, note 3). Maurois' discussion of Sartre's play *Les Mains Sales* in *De Gide à Sartre* (see I, note 8) exhibits a similar straddling of the boundary between principle and practice. His sympathies are with Hoederer, the practical, hard-headed, but humane Communist who wants results and is prepared "to compromise, trim, and lie" to get them, rather than with Hugo, the moral and doctrinaire purist. Hoederer is "authentic, solid, an adult; Hugo is a child" (p. 303). Earlier in the chapter, Sartre himself was faulted for refusing to talk to the students at Cornell because of US aggression in Vietnam. The refusal, writes Maurois, was "un beau geste." But Sartre "might have done more for peace by going to Cornell and telling the American students some truths that they were quite ready to hear." Characteristically, however, Maurois acknowledges that "those who choose efficacy over purity are nostalgic for purity" (p. 285).

6 Romain Rolland and Stefan Zweig, *Briefwechsel 1910–1940* (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1987), vol. 2 (1924–1940), p. 500; Stefan Zweig, *Briefe*, ed. Knut Beck and Jeffrey B. Berlin (Frankfurt a.M.: S. Fischer, 2005), p. 368, note 8. Maurois, it appears, had a dinner at his home for Thomas Mann, to which Giraudoux and Valéry were also invited (Jarrety, *Paul Valéry*, p. 860). Rolland's view of Maurois as a "phony liberal" is somewhat surprising in view of Maurois' frequent declarations of support for liberal values. In his previously cited *New York Times* review of Halévy's *History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century*, for instance, which appeared on 5 February 1933, within days of Hitler's coming to power in Germany, Maurois conceded that "in the disorder of the present crisis it is natural to doubt liberalism and to consider, as many are doing today, dictatorial and 'technocratic' governments." Halévy's view of the English faith in liberalism as a "magnificent illusion" was rejected, however. Maurois insisted that

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0007

"British liberalism [. . .] continues to show us the road to a true and gentle civilization" (*New York Times*, 5 February 1933).

7 *Daily Princetonian*, 9 October 1934. The article criticized by the student was entitled "Taming Man's Instinct for War." It appeared in *The New York Times* on 7 October 1934. In fact, Maurois was far more attentive to social and economic problems than the student allowed.

8 Interview with Frédéric Lefèvre in *Nouvelles Littéraires*, 11 March 1933, reprinted in *Une Heure avec* (as in III, note 3), p. 48. "I am not a dualist. I have a hard time separating body and soul, the abstract and the concrete, reason and the senses. These are all verbal, not real distinctions." Seven years earlier he had told the same journalist, "If I did have a system it would be 'totalism.' I deeply dislike all these distinctions" (interview in *Nouvelles Littéraires*, 1 May 1926, reprinted in *Une Heure avec*, p. 34).

9 "Economic Relativity," in *A Private Universe* (as in I, note 17), pp. 254–266, on p. 266 (in French in *Mes Songes que voici* [Paris: Grasset, 1930]). The Pegram lectures, composed in the year of his death for delivery at Brookhaven National Laboratory, demonstrate that Maurois never abandoned this attitude of pragmatic scepticism: "We no longer believe that infinite knowledge will make us masters of the Universe. We do not believe that the world will be governed by our science. We do not believe that we shall ever discover nature's last secret. We believe that any such last secret is the supreme illusion. Our brain is equipped not for any such enterprise as this but rather for supplying us with an image of the world useful to the individual within the limited scope of his *Lebensraum*" (*Illusions* [New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1968], lecture II, p. 64).

10 "Heinrich von Kleist," in *Robert et Elizabeth Browning: Portraits suivis de quelques autres* (Paris: Grasset, 1955), pp. 65–102, on p. 75.

11 This was the essay entitled "The Need for Political Scepticism," the text of which had been Russell's presidential address to the Students' Union at the London School of Economics in 1923. As, in all likelihood, Maurois found it in the volume entitled *Sceptical Essays*, published in 1928, it seems that he had indeed lost no time in getting hold of Russell's latest writings. In general, he could only have sympathized with the tenor of all the essays in this volume, including the introduction.

12 "A Holiday Diary, 1928," in *A Private Universe*, pp. 32–33. As it is unlikely that Maurois was unaware of the meaning of the term "national socialism" in the German context at the time, he may have intended to recall that other, somewhat more liberal versions of "national socialism" (such as Friedrich Naumann's *Nationalsozialer Verein* of 1896 or Henry Hyndman's National Socialist Party, founded in Britain in 1916) had preceded the rise of Hitler's German National Socialist Workers' Party. Though Russell's aim was essentially the same as Maurois'—to achieve social justice within

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0007

a framework that did not require the radical elimination of capitalism and individual enterprise—he also had in mind the resolution not only of internal class conflicts but of international conflicts. He, in fact, referred not to "national socialism" but to "International Socialism" and his model was the co-operation of the "Allied governments" during the 1914–1918 war: "They controlled production absolutely because they controlled raw material, and could ration factories as they chose. As regards food they even controlled retail distribution. They fixed prices as well as quantities. Their power was exercised mainly through the Allied Maritime Transport Council, which [...] controlled nearly all the world's available shipping, and was consequently able to dictate the conditions of import and export. [...] The odd thing about this system is that it was introduced without antagonising the capitalists. It was a necessary feature of wartime politics that at all costs no important section of the population must be antagonised. For instance at the time of the greatest stringency in the shipping position, it was argued that munitions must be cut down rather than food, for fear of discontent in the civilian population. To have alienated the capitalists would have been very dangerous. [...] The attitude was not: Such-and-such classes of men are wicked and must be punished. The attitude was: The peacetime system was inefficient and a new system must be established with a minimum of hardship to all concerned" (Bertrand Russell, "The Need for Political Scepticism" in his *Sceptical Essays* [London: George Allen & Unwin, 1928], pp. 99–111, on p. 107).

13 Russell, "The Need for Political Scepticism," p. 109.

14 "Tout s'arrange," *The Fortnightly*, March 1935, pp. 295–297, on p. 297. On the no less striking political passivity in the 1930s of the author of "The Need for Political Scepticism," see Philip Ironside, *The Social and Political Thought of Bertrand Russell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 184–185: Rejecting the available alternatives, "in a period which saw a dramatic politicisation of English intellectual life, Russell displayed a certain indifference even to those issues with which he might have been expected to engage passionately; indeed it seems undeniable that he is strangely absent as an intellectual and political influence in the 1930s."

15 "Je suis juif, ma famille est en France, ce sont des industriels, je ne peux pas les mettre sur la paille" (cited in Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, vol. 1, "Le Rebelle, 1890–1944" [Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1984], p. 389). See also Eric Roussel, *Charles de Gaulle* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), pp. 144–145.

16 *Tragedy in France* (as in III, note 15), p. 154. His position was thus similar to that of his friend, the writer and aviator Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, who is said to have explained his refusal to join de Gaulle in the following terms: "Je l'aurais suivi avec joie contre les Allemands, je ne pouvais le faire contre les Français" ["I would have followed him joyfully against the Germans, I could

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0007

not join him against the French"]. (Cited in Jacques le Groignec, *Pétain et les Américains* [Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Latines, 1995], p. 243.)

17 Lynne Olson, *Citizens of London* (New York: Random House, 2010), pp. 48, 65, 69; *Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence*, ed. Warren F. Kimball (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), vol. 1, p. 104 (letter as telegram, December 7, 1940). According to the official historian F.H. Hinsley, "It was widely believed outside Great Britain that we were in imminent danger of defeat" (*British Intelligence in the Second World War* [1984], cited in Richard Lamb, *Churchill as War Leader—Right or Wrong?* [London: Bloomsbury, 1991], p. 75). "World opinion is that the British are licked," Roosevelt's friend Breckenridge Long, a former ambassador to Italy under Mussolini, and an assistant secretary of state (1939–1944), noted in his War Diary (cited in Olson, *Citizens of London*, p. 90). Support among French politicians for seeking an armistice "on honourable terms" in June 1940 was based in large measure on the conviction that the British were bound in their turn to be defeated soon after (William L. Langer, *Our Vichy Gamble* [New York: A.A. Knopf, 1947], pp. 43, 62–63, 83). On pressure on Churchill from some leading British politicians, notably Lord Halifax, to put out peace feelers, see Geoffrey Best, *Churchill: A Study in Greatness* (London and New York: Hambledon and London, 2001), pp. 170–172.

18 On the State Department's policy of maintaining relations with Vichy, see the judicious study of Langer, *Our Vichy Gamble* (as in note 17 above). As at least it was explained after the war by G. Henry-Haye, Vichy's ambassador to the United States, Vichy's strategy was not unlike that envisaged by Maurois. Of what, Henry-Haye asked rhetorically, did his detractors consider him guilty: "of having helped to keep the French fleet and French bases out of the clutches of the Germans? Of having allowed the United States to gain the time needed for it to enter the conflict by removing all the issues that might have led to a break in relations between Vichy and Washington, which would have been premature and bad for both parties? Of having helped to ensure the shipment of food to an exhausted France and especially to North Africa, where in fact it was in line with American plans and facilitated the military operation of 8 November, 1942?" (Henry-Haye, *La grande Éclipse franco-américaine*, p. 349.) On secret talks between London and Vichy, see Louis Rougier, *Les Accords Pétain-Churchill: Histoire d'une mission secrète* (Montreal: Beauchemin, 1945) and the discussion of Rougier's claims by Jeffrey Mehlman in his *Émigré New York: French Intellectuals in Wartime Manhattan* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), pp. 117–144; also Pierre Montagnon, *La France dans la guerre de 39 à 45* (Paris: Pygmalion, 2009); *Le Moment 1940: effondrement national et réalités locales. Actes du colloque international d'Orléans, les 18 et 19 novembre 2010*, ed. Pierre Allorant, Noëlline Castagnez, Antoine Prost (Paris: Harmattan, 2012); and, from a

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0007

point of view strongly biased in favour of Pétain and Vichy, le Groignec, *Pétain et les Américains* (as in note 16 above), pp. 257–263, 394–413. On the negotiations surrounding the armistice itself, see Jacques Bourdu, *L'Armistice de 1940. Histoire d'une faute tragique* (Paris: François-Xavier de Guibert, 2007), chapter 5, pp. 125–161, and the essential texts of Albert Kammerer, *La Vérité sur l'Armistice* (Paris: Éditions Médicis, 1944) and *La Tragédie de Mers el-Kebir* (Paris: Éditions Médicis, 1945). On the alleged conviction of Pétain and Weygand that only the Americans could save France, see le Groignec, *Pétain et les Américains*, p. 263)

19 *Tragedy in France* (as in III, note 15), p. 156. So too in a journal entry for 12 April 1946, referring to his appeals in private and in public for Britain to devote more of its resources to the defense of France: "One of my great sorrows during this war was sometimes finding myself in tactical disagreement with Englishmen whom I liked and admired as individuals. Still, I had to speak the truth about what, right or wrong, I thought to be the best interest of both our countries. It was difficult and painful" (*From My Journal*, trans. Joan Charles [New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1947], p. 58). In retrospect, however, in the revised version of his *Memoirs*, Maurois acknowledged an error of judgment: "*I was wrong* [italics in text], and the British experts were right. Unable to save France, they felt capable of saving England, and the latter, later on, would re-establish France among the nations. This strategy, after terrible years, was to prove effective. To a Frenchman filled with anguish and with doubt, it seemed *at that time* [italics in text] egoistic" (*Memoirs 1885–1967*, p. 256). The "egoistic" preoccupation of the British with their own defence and their failure to deploy their air and ground forces in sufficient numbers to defend their ally was a recurrent theme among supporters of Pétain.

20 Alfred Conquet, *Auprès du Maréchal Pétain* (Paris: Éditions France-Empire, 1970), p. 243. The organization had offices on the Place de la Concorde in Paris and on Fifth Avenue in New York. In a speech at the opening of the *Office* Pétain singled out André Siegfried and André Maurois for having "vigorously" insisted in their writings on "the value and necessity of the mutual interpenetration of our two peoples" (p. 244). It is unclear how the *Office* was related to the *Comité France-Amérique*, founded by the former foreign minister Gabriel Hanotaux in 1909 and still active in France in the years following the Armistice. On Maurois' meeting Pétain at Simone de Caillavet's, see Bona, *Il n'y a qu'un amour* (as in II, note 1), p. 222.

21 *Dialogues sur le commandement* in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 5, p. 34; *Captains and Kings* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1925), pp. 47–48. On Pétain's right-wing sympathies in the 1920s and 1930s, see Richard Griffiths, *Marshal Pétain* (London: Constable, 1970), pp. 158–217; Didier Fischer, *Le Mythe Pétain* (Paris: Flammarion, 2002), pp. 197–259; Charles Williams, *Pétain*

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0007

(London: Little, Brown, 2005), pp. 273–288. Pétain's comment about England as France's "implacable enemy" (cited in Williams, *Pétain*, p. 287) was made to the Italian ambassador in 1936 and was contradicted two years later by the Marshal's speech at Boulogne in praise of the Entente Cordiale on the occasion of the visit to France of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. For a nuanced view of Pétain, see Simon Epstein, *Les dreyfusards sous l'Occupation* (as in II, note 1), pp. 180–210. Epstein recalls (p. 200) that Pétain was highly respected in left-wing circles in France in the 1930s.

22 So, at least, he recalls in his *Memoirs* (*Memoirs 1885–1967,* pp. 195, 264); see also Bona, *Il n'y a qu'un amour* (as in II, note 1), p. 348, Simon Epstein, *Les dreyfusards sous l'Occupation* (as in II, note 1), p. 199, and Anny Wynchank's report of an interview with Maurois' son-in-law, the well-regarded neurophysiologist Robert Naquet, in July 2001, in *Jewish Writers of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Sorrel Kerbel (New York and London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2003), pp. 365–367. Asked by his American admirer and biographer, the late Jack Kolbert (as in I, note 8), what quality he most desired and respected in his male friends, Maurois replied: "loyalty." To say that "Maurois was faithful to Vichy" (Raoul Aglion, *De Gaulle et Roosevelt. La France Libre aux États-Unis* [Paris: Plon, 1984], p. 101) seems, nonetheless, to be an over-simplification of his position, even if Gaston Henry-Haye, Vichy's ambassador to Washington, could claim after the war with some justice, that whereas Henry Bernstein was "violently opposed to the Vichy régime," André Maurois, albeit also Jewish, "recognized Marshal Pétain as the legitimate head of the French government" (*La grande Éclipse franco-américaine*, p. 276).

23 Alain, *Propos*, ed. Maurice Savin, preface by André Maurois (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pleïade, 1956), p. 99 (*Propos*, dated 8 March 1911).

24 It is easy to imagine that Maurois appreciated the even-handed and nuanced day-by-day reporting of the trial of Pétain in *Le Figaro* by his old friend and associate, Jean Schlumberger, who had remained in France during the war years; see Jean Schlumberger, *Le Procès Pétain* [Paris: Gallimard, 1949]). He would probably also have applauded a similar attempt, decades later, to be as fair and understanding as possible in the novelist Jean d'Ormesson's response (27 February 1986) on behalf of the Académie Française to the accession speech of the newly elected Michel Mohrt, a right-wing novelist, essayist and critic:

> I have wondered on occasion, when reading you, how you would have evolved if the feelings of loyalty and honour, which are so strong in you, had propelled you towards London and into the camp of the General. It is noteworthy, moreover, that writers so thoroughly marked by Anglo-Saxon influences that their sympathy bordered on anglomania—writers such as Morand, Maurois and yourself—did not show solidarity with England, whereas specialists of the Germanic world, such as Marcel Brion or Robert d'Harcourt forcefully made known their hostility to a disfigured Germany, in which they could no longer recognize the

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0007

features of Kant, Goethe and Heine. I always try to understand those who do not think as I do. I believe I understand how you felt toward those who wanted to continue the struggle against the invader. It seemed to you, I imagine, that these were the very same people who, because of their pacifism, their failure to react, their insouciance through all the years leading up to the dramatic conflict, had enfeebled a France that you wanted to be strong. Would you permit me to take the opposite point of view and to present the other side of the picture? They, the pacifists who, as Malraux put it, made war unwillingly, could on their side be surprised and dismayed to see men like you, nourished on nationalist sentiments, the cult of the motherland and that love of the carnal earth of which the *Action Française* talked so much, fail to join in the struggle to liberate the nation's lands occupied by the invader. We are still barely distancing ourselves from the violent passions that inevitably accompany the wounding and agony of the nation. [...] It was another of our colleagues, François Mauriac, who more than forty years ago, at the end of the 1945 trial [of Pétain—LG], lucidly and courageously offered the best commentary, in my view, on that national, and perhaps more than national tragedy: "A trial like that is never concluded and will always be reopened. Is not that, at bottom, why Pétain gave himself up? Because he delivered himself up to our justice, nothing is over for him. The dialogue of the prosecution and the defence will go on for centuries. For everyone, whatever happens, for his adversaries as well as for his admirers, he will remain a figure of tragedy, eternally wandering over the territory that lies between sacrifice and betrayal. Let all those of us keep silent," François Mauriac concluded, "who were too involved in the events of those dark years to be able to resist either an unjust hatred or an unjust love." (http://www.academie-francaise.fr/reponse-au-discours-de-reception-de-m-michel-mohrt)

25 "The Case for France. Famous writer answers American grievances against his country," *Life*, 6 January, 1941, pp. 63–68. On negative American perceptions of France after the defeat, which Maurois felt he had to combat, see Henry-Haye, *La grande Éclipse franco-américaine*, pp. 159–160, 179–185, and the newspaper cartoons reproduced between pp. 158 and 159. For a sympathetic presentation of Maurois' position, see Guy Fritsch-Estrangin's study of divisions within the New York émigré community, *New York entre Pétain et de Gaulle: Les Français aux États-Unis de 1940 à 1946* (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1969), pp. 147–152.

26 Virginia Woolf, *Diary,* ed. Anne Olivier Bell (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), vol. 5 (1936–1941), p. 294. Woolf was referring to a BBC broadcast by Maurois, based on a speech that he had given that afternoon at the Ministry of Information in the presence of Duff Cooper, the Minister,

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0007

and Harold Nicolson, then an MP, and that had received a standing ovation from the 300 British journalists present. Duff Cooper arranged for Maurois to broadcast the speech over the BBC at its "'best time,' that is, the 'Postscript to the News' at 9:15 p.m." (*Tragedy in France* [as in III, note 15], pp. 140–143) Maurois judged the British military contribution alarmingly and, as time went on, culpably inadequate, as is clear from his Memoirs, his 1940 articles in *Collier's Weekly* [see III, note 15] and the 1940 book *Tragedy in France*. On the debates in British government and military circles concerning "the degree to which it was prudent to commit British resources to France in the hope of encouraging the French to continue fighting" and on the decision, despite French pleas for more help, to retain sufficient fighter planes to defend Britain in the event, increasingly viewed as likely, of a French surrender, see Raymond A. Callahan, *Churchill: Retreat from Empire* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1984), pp. 76–80.

27 "Mon cher Nicolson,

> Je veux vous dire au revoir et aussi vous remercier. Vous avez montré, dans des circonstances qui rendent les actions de tous si difficiles, beaucoup de bonne grâce et de compréhension. J'espère de tout coeur que je pourrai, en Amérique et peut-être au Canada, rendre quelque service à nos deux pays, car j'estime encore que leurs intérêts vrais sont liés. Je ne le ferai pas bruyamment pour les raisons que vous connaissez, mais je tâcherai de le faire de manière efficace. En attendant je voudrais que vous sachiez que mon affection et mon admiration pour l'Angleterre ont été renforcées par ce séjour que j'y ai fait au moment le plus affreux de ma vie.
>
> Bien affectueusement à vous.
>
> André Maurois
>
> (Hand written note, dated 3 July 1940, on the stationery of the Dorchester Hotel, London. Princeton University Library, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Harold Nicolson Papers, series 2, box 2, folder 10).

Nicolson fully deserved the gratitude Maurois expressed for the "bonne grâce" and "compréhension" with which he responded to the dilemmas of his French friends at the time of the fall of France. In one of the "Marginal Comments," that he contributed to the weekly magazine *The Spectator* he imagined how Englishmen might have reacted to their country's being overrun by the Germans in 1914 and how they might have rallied in despair around an English national hero similar to Pétain; see "The Dismissal of Weygand" (dated 28 November 1941), in his *Friday Mornings 1941–1944* (London: Constable, 1944), pp. 30–34.

28 On lack of support for de Gaulle, then a relatively unfamiliar figure and distrusted by many who did know him, until well into 1941, see Langer, *Our*

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0007

Vichy Gamble (as in note 17 above), pp. 166, 174, 258. On London in June 1940 as a place one gets out of, see Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle* (Paris, 1984), vol. 1, p. 388, citing Elisabeth de Miribel, a writer who became De Gaulle's secretary. Likewise de Gaulle himself: "With few exceptions, the well-known French people who happened to be in London, either on government service or fortuitously did not join Free France. Many had themselves repatriated. A few stayed, but declared allegiance to Vichy" ["À Londres même, sauf quelques exceptions, les Français notoires qui s'y trouvaient, soit en service, soit par occasion, ne rejoignirent pas la France Libre. Beaucoup se firent rapatrier. Certains demeurèrent sur place, mais en faisant profession d'obédience à Vichy"]. (*Mémoires de Guerre* in *Mémoires*, ed. Marius-François Guyard [Paris: Gallimard, Editions de la Pléaide, 2000], p. 86.) De Gaulle cites the case of Charles Corbin, the French ambassador, who told him he had indicated where he stood by handing in his resignation the day after de Gaulle broadcast his appeal. As a civil servant, however, outright dissidence was too much for him. Others said: "We are going to America. That is where we can be most useful to you." (He mentions Maurois, Henri Bonnet, a diplomat, literary critic, and ambassador to the United States after the war, and Henri de Kérillis, a conservative journalist and fervent patriot who first supported de Gaulle and then, at the time of the invasion of North Africa, sided with Giraud and turned into a passionate enemy of de Gaulle.) On the general exodus of the French from London in 1940 (except for "the Jews, the left-wingers [excluding Communist Party members], and the first Gaullists"), see also Paul Morand, "Mes adieux à l'Angleterre en 1940" in his *Journal inutile* (as in I, note 2), vol. 2 (1973–1976), pp. 750–751. Morand himself, head of the French economic mission in London, served Vichy as ambassador to Switzerland and Romania.

29 *Memoirs 1885–1967*, pp. 285–286. Out of respect, Maurois does not name Bernstein, who had died; see also Jack Kolbert, *The Worlds of André Maurois* (as in I, note 8), pp. 58–59 and Dominique Bona, *Il n'y a qu'un amour* (as in II, note 1), pp. 379–380. On Maurois' attitude to Vichy and de Gaulle, see, in addition to Fritsch-Estrangin (note 25 above), de Gaulle's *Mémoires de Guerre* in his *Mémoires*, ed. Marius-François Guyard, p. 86; Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle the Rebel 1890–1944*, trans. Patrick O'Brian (London : Collins Harvill, 1990), pp. 238, 347; Alain Peyrfitte, *C'était de Gaulle* (Paris: Fayard, 1997), p. 183; Eric Roussel, *Charles de Gaulle* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), pp. 142, 145, 164, 252. On the "poisonous atmosphere" among the French exiles in New York, see Jeffrey Mehlman, *Émigré New York* (as in note 18 above), pp. 117–144; Lacouture, *De Gaulle the Rebel*, p. 347; Michèle Cointet, *De Gaulle et Giraud. L'affrontement 1942–1944* (Paris: Perrin, 2005), pp. 244–251. Maritain's reported comment to Aglion is cited in Langer, *Our Vichy Gamble* (as in note 17 above), p. 261.

30 Olivier Rony, *Jules Romains, ou l'appel au monde* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1993), p. 514. "France Forever: Union of Americans and Free French for Victory"

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0007

was an association of Gaullist sympathizers established in Philadelphia in August 1940. Maurois did appeal for aid for French prisoners of war. (See his speech to the Coordinating Council of French Relief Societies in November 1941, in his *Espoirs et souvenirs* [New York: Éditions de la Maison Française, 1943], pp. 51–61.) It was characteristic of him as a fervent French patriot that, after the landings in North Africa, having first followed American policy in supporting General Giraud rather than de Gaulle, he rallied behind the latter (so, at least he claims in his revised *Memoirs 1885–1967*), since "Giraud was in no sense a statesman," whereas "General de Gaulle saw further into the future and was interested in keeping France among the great powers." Similarly, in the crisis of 1958, he agreed to head up a *Front d'Action Civique* in support of de Gaulle because "in that state of chaos no one aside from de Gaulle had prestige great enough to bring the army and the police force to heel" or "had a will strong enough to carry out the reform of our institutions." In 1965 he voted for de Gaulle against Mitterand (*Memoirs 1885–1967*, pp. 299–300, 392–394, 423–424).

31 *I Remember, I Remember*, trans. Denver and Jane Lindley (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1942), p. 281; slightly differently formulated in *Memoirs 1885–1967*, p. 277. On the anti-Jewish laws, see Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France, Old Guard and New Order 1940–1944* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), pp. 174, 178–179, and Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, n.d. [1981]). Vichy's policies toward the Jews and Pétain's position, in particular, have been the object of much scholarly scrutiny and speculation. The bottom line appears to be that Vichy (and Pétain) were deeply marked by anti-Semitism and carried out anti-Semitic policies independently of the Germans, but that Vichy's anti-Semitism was the traditional anti-Semitism of the political Right and "rested upon different bases from Nazi anti-Semitism. Left to itself Vichy would probably have stopped short at job discrimination and measures calculated to hasten the further emigration of foreign Jews. Vichy xenophobia was more cultural and national than racial" (Paxton, *Vichy France*, pp. 174–175). In general, the work of Marrus and Paxton suggests that Vichy offered some protection to native and acculturated French Jews, that members of the government occasionally intervened to have individuals with whom they were personally friendly exempted from anti-Jewish legislation, and that Pétain himself—though not cured by his love of a Jewish woman, at one point in his career, of "the latent anti-Semitism, which from time to time has marked the Marshal's whole life"—resisted some anti-Jewish measures, was concerned for French Jewish veterans, and even consulted the Pope on the moral aspects of anti-Jewish action and legislation (Francis Martel, *Pétain: Verdun to Vichy* [New York: E.P. Dutton, 1943], p. 27; see also Jean Defrasne, *Histoire de la collaboration* [Paris: Presses Universitaires de

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0007

France, 1982], pp. 102–104). According to the Jewish historian Annie Kriegel (1926–1995), comparative figures of survival rates provide clear evidence that French Jews resident in the *zone libre* of Vichy France had a far better chance of surviving than Jews anywhere else in Hitler's Europe (*Ce que j'ai cru comprendre* [Paris: Laffont, 1991], pp. 172–173).

32 Pierre Pucheu (1899–1944), a contemporary of Brasillach and Sartre at the École Normale, headed one of the big steel monopolies, the Cartel d'Acier, before the war. An extreme right-winger and anti-Semite, he was one of the "technocrats" recruited by Vichy and served as Minister of the Interior from 1941 to 1942. In 1944, on orders of de Gaulle, he was executed in Algeria, where he had settled. Marcel Peyrouton, French Resident-General in Tunisia and Morocco before the war, was appointed Minister of the Interior in the Vichy government in September 1940, in which capacity he signed the racial laws against the Jews on 3 October, 1940. Subsequently he became Vichy ambassador to Argentina but having indicated his support for Giraud after the landings in North Africa, was recruited by the U.S. to be governor-general of Algeria. Admiral François Darlan, head of the French navy, held various offices in the Vichy government and was one of the regime's keenest collaborators with Germany, though he began to move away from this position as he saw victory elude the German armies in Russia. As he was in Algeria at the time of the allied invasion of North Africa, the American high command, which was in charge of the operation, made a "deal" with him in the hope of bringing a quick end to unexpectedly stiff resistance by the French army: he was recognized as commander of all French forces in North Africa in return for agreeing to order an immediate ceasefire. The so-called Darlan deal provoked outrage in Britain and in the ranks of the Free French.

33 Harold Nicolson, *Friday Mornings, 1941–1944* (as in note 27 above), p. 95. Nicolson's friend Raymond Mortimer, the author of numerous reviews of French literature in *The Times*, told an interviewer many years after the war: "Maurois was my friend. I was still meeting him for dinner before he left for the United States. I never could accept his support of Pétain. I refused to meet with him ever again after that and wrote him a letter only just before he died" (conversation reported by Jean-François Fogel, *Morand-Express* [Paris: Grasset, 1980], pp. 173–174).

34 *Spectator*, 27 November 1942, p. 502. Cited in the catalogue of an exhibition of work by *Jacques-Émile Blanche, peintre (1861–1942)* at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Rouen 15 October 1997–15 February 1998, p. 32, and in Georges-Paul Collet, *Jacques-Émile Blanche. Biographie* (Paris: Bartillat, 2006), p. 534, but wrongly attributed in both to *The Times* for 27 November. (In fact, the obituary of Blanche had appeared in *The Times* on 18 November 1942.) Collet's richly informed study makes clear, however, that in the course of World War II, and especially after the August 1942 Allied raid on Dieppe,

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0007

where his handsome manor house was located, Blanche—an anti-Dreyfusard before World War I and subsequently a supporter of the extreme right-wing *Action française*—had turned strongly anglophobic, a development of which Nicolson was obviously ignorant. "What is so striking in Jacques-Émile Blanche's correspondence in the years 1939–1942," Collet notes, "is his violently anti-Gaullist and anglophobic attitude. From his earliest years, this man had adored England and her artists and writers, many of whom were his friends. He had done much to make them known in France, and along with André Maurois and a few others, was the most anglophile of the Frenchmen of his time. How could he have written the horrendous things we now know he wrote about the British people and its politicians?" (Collet, *Jacques-Émile Blanche*, pp. 495–496).

35 Jeanne Pouquet, *Journal sous l'occupation en Périgord 1942–1945* (as in II, note 1), pp. 39–40. Mme Pouquet's reference to *Tragédie en France* is on p. 150 (27 August 1944). On her role in spreading the idea in France of a "Maurois pétainiste", see Bona, *Il n'y a qu'un amour*, p. 388. On André Wateau as a legal adviser of Simone de Caillavet, see Michelle Maurois, *Déchirez cette lettre* (Paris: Flammarion, 1990), p. 344 *et passim*.

36 Letter to Anne Heurgon-Desjardins, the daughter of the organizer of the "décades" of Pontigny, herself a close friend of Maurois', 5 October 1941, in Roger Martin du Gard, *Correspondance générale*, vol. 8, ed. Bernard Duchatelet [Paris: Gallimard, 1997], pp. 255–256). Just after the war, when Martin du Gard and Jean Schlumberger were looking for a pretext to withdraw from the *Comité national des écrivains*, which had come to be dominated by Communists, Martin du Gard hesitated to accept Schlumberger's suggestion that if the Comité were to blacklist Maurois, that would constitute sufficient grounds for withdrawing: "I still feel warm friendship and esteem for M. But it does seem to me that there are obvious grounds for complaint—which our knowledge of the man and our friendship allow us to overlook but which would put us in a very false position if we were to deny them by withdrawing" (letter to Jean Schlumberger, 23 August 1946, in *Correspondance générale*, vol. 9, ed. Bernard Duchatelet [Paris: Gallimard, 2006], p. 147).

37

> The general suggested to me that we take a little walk on the terrace. This amounted to offering me the opportunity of a private conversation, and I took advantage of it to speak to him at some length of Maurois. In the general's writings a sentence had somewhat surprised and hurt me, I told him, the one in which he states that he met Maurois only once and hopes never to see him again. I tried to explain Maurois' attitude, which, I said (and this was going rather far on my part), would have been very different if he had been better informed. I added: his eyes will soon open when he talks with the friends who are at present expecting

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0007

him here. Maurois is wrong because he has been deceived. He thinks it is his duty to remain faithful to the marshal, and he is all the more inclined to think so as that duty pains him and, in acting thus, he is setting all his former friends against him. The general's features had stiffened somewhat and I am not sure that my rather vehement defense did not irritate him. (Less sure, and this is worse, that my arguments were all valid, it seemed to me after having seen Maurois again.) (André Gide, *Journals*, trans. Justin O'Brien [Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000], vol. 4 [1939–1949], p. 220)

38 Louis Rougier, *Mission secrète à Londres: Les Accords Pétain-Churchill*, édition définitive considérablement augmentée (Geneva: Éditions du Cheval ailé, 1946), Avertissement, pp. 12–13. Maurois on Rougier in *Memoirs 1885–1967*, p. 284. While mostly disdaining to respond to his critics, Maurois did once defend himself against an attack on him in the Canadian Gaullist paper *Le Jour*, laying out his position succinctly in eight points: "1) What I want above all else is the complete liberation of France; 2) this liberation can be accomplished only by the victory of England and America; 3) I passionately desire this victory; 4) I have admired the courage and tenacity of the English; 5) I have publicly praised them for this everywhere; 6) I admire the will to resist of the French; 7) I reject any political or military collaboration with the invader; 8) the France of tomorrow should be a free country ruled according to the will of the French people" (cited in Bona, *Il n'y a qu'un amour*, pp. 389–390). Charles Boyer, the film star and a long-time French resident of the U.S., likewise refused to take sides, while lending a helping hand to many refugee cinema artists and organizing a program of food packages for French prisoners of war. In his studio he had hung portraits of Lyautey, Pétain, and de Gaulle (Cointet, *De Gaulle et Giraud. L'affrontement 1942–1944* [as in note 29 above], p. 245).

39 Interview with Frédéric (11 March 1933) in *Une Heure avec* (as in III, note 3); *Memoirs 1885–1967*, p. 345.

40 André Maurois and Aragon, *Histoire Parallèle* (Paris: Presses de la Cité, 1962). The quotations from Aragon are from vol. IV, pp. 183–185.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0007

V Making Sense: The "New Biography"

Abstract: *Maurois' writing style was also determined by avoidance of extremes: in an age of social, intellectual and artistic disarray, his novels and above all his spectacularly successful biographies—like those of Lytton Strachey in England and Emil Ludwig in Germany—offered a grateful public the reassurance of intelligible narratives and knowable agents, without resorting to outworn and discredited novelistic formulas. Fully aware of the difficulty of making sense of events and defining character, respectful of the challenging experiments of writers such as Virginia Woolf, he nevertheless "attached the greatest importance to clarity" and to seeking "permanent forms under the shifting appearances." The suavity that ensured his popularity was also the quality that ultimately undermined that popularity.*

Gossman, Lionel. *André Maurois (1885–1967): Fortunes and Misfortunes of a Moderate*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0008.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0008

Characteristically, Maurois himself acknowledged that his scepticism, his dislike of "systems" and of moral and intellectual extremes and his willingness to "listen to an adversary with the dangerous desire to understand him"—his "politeness," in his own words—could constitute, in some respects, a weakness. " 'You lack aggressiveness,' Lucien Romier [editor of *Le Figaro*—L.G.] used to say to me; and it is true that the moderation which is natural to me robs the mind of its mordancy. 'Truth is excessive,' our Alain used to teach, 'and one must go beyond, well beyond, the point of moderation if one wishes to understand even the simplest thing.' And Blake: 'The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom.' "[1] The effect of Maurois' moderation on his literary work itself may not have been entirely salutary and may have contributed to his fall from grace in an age less respectful and admiring than his of propriety, elegance and clarity. Reviewing the 1970 edition of his *Memoirs* in the *New York Times*, Thomas Lask described him as "the quintessential French writer: stylish, rational, aphoristic, balanced, without excesses, humane and withal very genuine. [...] The two qualities that best describe him," the reviewer continued, "are kindness and amiability." These characteristics, however, in Lask's view, "make for blandness":

> A phrase he likes to use is "a man of good-will," and in this history it applies to friends, government officials, publishers, readers, students, colleagues, to virtually all men in high places, and, by no means least, to himself. Such a man, learned, informed, precisely articulate, must have made a comfortable companion, an admirable friend, a perfect citizen. But in an autobiography, these virtues make for blandness. The evenness of tone, the lack of bite detract from the sharpness of the portrait [...] Maurois probably never published an ugly sentence in his life, never an awkward phrase, a rough or ill-turned sequence, an inept analogy. [...] But the result is that a fine though constant film of words intercedes between reader and writer.[2]

Lask might well have extended his reservations about the autobiography to Maurois' biographies, which, narrated in a precise, crisp, elegant, often witty French—little practised, it should be said, by writers today—remain probably his most enduring achievement. As Du Bos noted in his Journal in 1923, in *Ariel*, his biography of Shelley, Maurois had given his readers an "histoire de la vie de Shelley" ["story of Shelley's life"], in which "tout est sacrifié à la trame maintenue du récit" ["everything is sacrificed to the sustained course of the narrative"]. After the early work on Shelley, there was greater emphasis—as also later in his own *Memoirs*—on the public sphere, since in Maurois' view, one of the merits of his biographies was

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0008

"to reveal a society, a human group, by slow degrees as the hero himself discovers them."[3] Here too, however, despite diligent scholarly research, intelligent and plausible interpretation, and wonderfully polished writing, the overall impression is often of smoothly flowing narrative and description, interspersed with neat and witty commentary, rather than challenging analyses, questions, or insights. Likewise, the presentation of the individual, while well-informed, and persuasive, relies on traditional psychological and rhetorical categories and never crosses the boundaries of propriety. It is never deeply probing or disturbing. Formal coherency and moral decency are never threatened.[4]

Maurois was by no means unaware of changes in the modern understanding of the individual or of how the new understanding differed from that of the past (Shakespeare and Montaigne being cited as exceptional in their awareness of complexity and change). "The whole of modern literature is dominated by the idea that the personality is far from being as simple a thing as it has sometimes been thought to be," he told an interviewer in 1926.[5] Two years later, the first of the Clark lectures on "Aspects of Biography," with its references to Proust, Dostoevsky, and modern physics gave evidence of familiarity with up-to-date ideas on the topic. The lecturer considered seriously whether the new understanding of the individual might even make the "new biography"—that is, biography as a work of both history and literary art, a portrait of the inner life of the individual as well as an account of his activity on the world stage—impossible. A passage from Virginia Woolf, who thought it probably would, was quoted at some length.[6] Maurois conceded that

> it is not so easy to understand how it is possible to construct a historical character without spoiling him. Think of Ruskin, think of Gladstone; they were real living beings like you and me, like our friends; each of them was to those who knew them a problem, confronted with which their friends passed their lives without being able to establish any order in an overabundant mass of observations and impressions. What is the biographer to do? Must he try to re-create this living problem? The problem is made up of a vast accumulation of details and it would take a life-time to get through them. Ought he to group the details as in a well-designed portrait? In that case he is getting away from the real thing. [. . .] To make of a man a system consistent with itself, clear, yet false, or to give up all attempts at making an intelligible system of him—such is the dilemma of the biographer.[7]

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0008

Equally, Maurois insisted, the biographer cannot be content with a surface portrait based on "preconceived ideas." He must study exhaustively to discover "the man behind the legend."[8]

Some uncertainty is even expressed, here and there, as to whether, in fact, such an authentic being exists, whether there is anything stable, coherent and definable that can be associated with an individual's name. "If I were to let all the surface agitation die down, what is the real Ego which I shall find under all this?" the hero of *A Voyage to the Island of the Articoles* (1929) wonders in the privacy of his Journal. "Would it not be emptiness, nothingness, silence? Am I anything besides my words and gesticulations? [...] I, I, I. But what am I?"[9] In his Clark lectures, delivered around the same time, Maurois had evoked "the Freudian system" and while judging that it "had been pressed too far," acknowledged that as a result

> we have realised that a human being or a human event is a more complex amalgam than was ever believed before. In the same way that, in order to explain observed phenomena in physics, we must visualise the atoms as systems of electrons, revolving around a central nucleus, so to understand an individual character we must realise that it is made up of diverse personalities which are sometimes massed together and sometimes follow each other within it. [...] The real self with which we think we come face to face when we honestly examine ourselves [is] in itself very difficult to define.[10]

In a text written some years later, he noted the enduring preference of the British public for the traditional "heavy volumes of 'Life and Letters' "—essentially unsynthesized collections of documents and testimonies—and admitted that though the new biography ("la biographie en forme"), "which is a work of art, traces a portrait of its hero that is simpler and more intelligible," that portrait is for that very reason "somewhat inexact, for human beings are neither simple nor intelligible."[11] Comparing fictional and biographical characters in an article published shortly before his death, he acknowledged that

> a character in a novel is simpler than a real life character. We can *comprehend* him. [...] The most complex character in a novel or a biography is still simpler and more intelligible than the simplest of living human beings, because he or she has been conceived by a human mind and not by inexhaustible nature. What art represents is an image of reality (if it did not do that, many people would have no interest in it), but an image that is sufficiently removed from us to leave us without any desire to act, an image ordered by a human mind.[12]

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0008

Reviewing a collection of short stories by Henry James and a book on James, Maurois had already observed that "many writers considered 'social', who depicted reality without great concern for [artistic] form, have fallen into ever deeper oblivion, whereas Flaubert shines with a hard and youthful brightness and Henry James is being reprinted by more than one American publisher today."[13]

In the end, however, Maurois concludes—and this is again typical of his avoidance of stark choices and theoretical dichotomies, his preference for "practical" solutions—that the reconciliation of "truth" with "art," and of "reality" with coherent and intelligible formal representation is not only possible, but also necessary for both art and life, just as it is essential, in his view, for humans to pursue patterns of order ("knowledge") even while remaining fully cognizant of the randomness of "reality" and the provisional character of whatever patterns are at any time discerned: "Biography, in my view, does not consist in telling all one knows—for in that case the most trifling book would be as long as life itself—but in taking stock of one's knowledge and choosing what is essential." "In any life," he asserts confidently, "there is always a well-hidden harmony; the historian has to discover the mysterious rhythm in that existence."[14] While the concept of a "biographie romancée"—that is, a biography in which totally invented material has been introduced for the sake of the story—is firmly rejected, Maurois does accept that of a "biographie romanesque," for there are important similarities, he claims, between the work of the novelist and that of the biographer. Both must construct a coherent narrative and both must create convincing characters. The difference between them is simply that the biographer must do so using only documented data concerning his character and the acts in which he engaged and may not invent words, events, or situations, whereas the novelist is free to draw creatively on the entire range of his observations and experiences of life and people. "No one aware of the intellectual integrity of M. Maurois would believe for a moment that he would permit in biography the fictions with which too many writers today interlard their biographical work," the *New York Times* reviewer of *Aspects of Biography* assured the paper's readers. "But he does hold that the novel and biography have this in common: neither should bore. And the biographer who wishes to avoid boring his reader will learn one lesson the novelist can teach. There is a 'story' to every life. The novelist fabricates the story he puts forth as being the character's; the biographer must put forth the true story of his actual subject so that it is as apparent as it is real."[15]

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0008

Maurois' model of a modern biographer at this point was Lytton Strachey. Where Strachey's ironical and irreverent biographies were largely designed to undercut traditional and conventional notions of their subjects, however, Maurois' literary talent was employed more respectfully and reassuringly. Indeed he offers a mild criticism of Strachey—whom he knew, admired, and translated—as sometimes excessively iconoclastic.[16] It may well be, in fact, that Maurois' biographies owe their charm, attractiveness and success with the public to the moderate reassurance they provide about the coherency and knowableness of persons and situations. While not disdaining at times what his friend Desmond MacCarthy described as "the novelist's privilege"—the omniscient narrator's ability to tell the reader what is going on in his character's mind—Maurois does not abuse that privilege. Unlike some other biographers of the time, notably the hugely successful Emil Ludwig, he does not take the liberty of "imagining what [his] heroes or heroines were thinking at any given moment," when "documentary evidence for that is scanty or non-existent."[17] Still, Maurois' enormous success as a writer of biography is almost certainly due to the same factors that ensured the success of Emil Ludwig and Stefan Zweig, indeed of biography in general in the interwar years.

Contemporaries were keenly aware of the sudden, phenomenal popularity of biography and professional historians were irked by it, especially in Germany. Emil Ludwig's biographies of Goethe, Bismarck, Wilhelm II and Napoleon—by 1930 these had sold 1.3 million copies and been translated into all the European languages, making Ludwig, according to a League of Nations statistical survey, "the most widely translated author in the world"—were denounced by the entire German historical profession. The "new biography" was completely unscholarly, Wilhelm Schüssler declared in his introduction to a special number of the venerable *Historische Zeitschrift* (vol. 133, number 3, 1926), entitled *Historische Bellestristik. Ein kritischer Literaturbericht*. "Not one of its practitioners has the slightest conception of sources and of how to treat them methodically; not one has any inkling of critical method; not one knows anything about the true historian's way of seeing and interpreting the past. In short, our scholarly discipline is being broken into by dilettantes promoting their lemonade as fine, well-matured wine."[18] In the view of the great Dutch historian Johan Huizinga, while literature and history can coexist amicably, each in its proper sphere, and have long done so, the "new biography," which Huizinga presents as a phenomenal

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0008

market success in all European countries since the war, is in "disloyal competition" ["*illoyale Konkurrenz*"] with authentic history inasmuch as the true nature of its "hybrid products" is carefully masked and kept hidden from the reader, who is only too happy to believe that he is reading authentic history.[19] "Since 1918," in the summing up of the situation by Leo Löwenthal, an early member of the celebrated Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, "the political biography has become the classical literature of the German middle-brow."[20]

The new biography competed not only with the increasingly "scientific," technical and specialized writings of professional historians but with the often-difficult work of modern novelists. "We are all readers of biographies nowadays," Desmond MacCarthy asserted in 1934. Readers looked to biography to provide them with the narrative line and the solid individual characters they no longer found in either the latest historical writing or the modern literary novel. "It will be said that one characteristic of twentieth century literature was that its fiction tended to become more like biography [i.e. an accumulation of fragments, as in the massive, old-fashioned biographies of the nineteenth century—L.G.] and its biography more like fiction," MacCarthy explained. "Today in the novel the story often goes by the board."[21] That, it should be said, was a development that MacCarthy's friend Virginia Woolf welcomed. In a review of Forster's *Aspects of the Novel*, written for the *New York Herald Tribune*'s books section, she had taken Forster to task for tying the novel too closely to something he and other critics call "life" and for neglecting to consider "the medium in which a novelist works—words, pattern, beauty." To Forster's complaint that no English novelist had given as complete a picture of a man's life as Tolstoy, she responded: "If the English critic were less domestic, less assiduous to protect the rights of what it pleases him to call life, the novelist might be bolder too. He might cut adrift from [...] the plausible and preposterous formulas which are supposed to represent the whole of our human adventure. But then the story might wobble; the plot might crumble; ruin might seize upon the characters."[22]

That, according to Maurois' friend Jacques-Émile Blanche, one of Virginia Woolf's first and keenest French admirers as well as a painter of portraits of her and her mother, is exactly the significance of Woolf's novel *The Waves*. In his notes on this work, Blanche discerned both a danger and a triumph:

> Virginia's pursuit of originality will not turn out well. To write a novel without *narrative* [in English in the text], a novel in which the form itself,

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0008

> the composition, no longer has anything in common with this type of work? Joyce and his world-wide success: the trap. The novel is at a *stand-still* [in English in the text]; at a turning point, it is said. [...] But in *The Waves*, the morbid preoccupation with time and its passing, with decay, with the macabre, which is common to all the writers of the present age, [...] imparts to many pages a poetic beauty in which the author of *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* is immediately recognizable. [...] Nevertheless [Blanche maintains] the concept of a story suggested by the interior monologues of each of the brothers and sisters—which Virginia must have considered a great discovery—has led her on a path to ruin.

In an article entitled "Virginia Woolf et *The Waves*" published in 1931 in the newspaper *Le Figaro*, Blanche pursues the same theme:

> The great writer of *To the Lighthouse*—novelist, metaphysician, musician, poet and painter—has never yet achieved such a degree of emotion, lyricism, and profundity even while presenting her readers with a challenge. All forms are permitted in the novel. Still, would Mrs. Woolf have demanded of her devotees such an effort of attention, would she even have thought of getting them to accept a postulate that is nothing less than a wager, if James Joyce, after his *Ulysses*, had not dared to produce *Anna Livia Plurabelle*? But what does that matter, since she has won her bet by creating a novel without action, without a plot, without dialogue, totally static, a novel which delivers only the sound of her own words, her abstract meditations on the nothingness of life, the isolation of people who are incapable of communicating with each other. The sea. The waves. They merge, mount on each other, coming from no one knows where, and following a mysterious impulsion, seek each other, embrace each other, push up against each other, join and disjoin in a blind race to the shore, where, weary of struggle, they dissolve in an impalpable dust.[23]

Writing of "La jeune littérature anglaise" in 1927, shortly before the appearance of *The Waves*, Maurois had given a similar account of Woolf's work, emphasizing her radical shift away from the previous generation of novelists, the "Edwardians," as she termed them—Wells, Bennett, Galsworthy. In Woolf's eyes, Maurois recounts, "Mr. Bennett is the worst culprit of the three inasmuch as he is by far the best workman. He can make a book so well constructed that it is difficult for the most exacting of critics to see through what chink or crevice decay can creep in. And yet, if life should refuse to live there?" For life is, in fact, quite different, according to Woolf, from what is represented in the well-constructed novel. Maurois quotes Woolf at length, sympathetically, but in his characteristic manner without indicating full assent. After finishing a novel by Wells or Bennett or Galsworthy, Woolf had written:

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0008

> We drop the finished novel on the crest of a sigh. Is it worth while? What is the point of it all? [...] Whether we call it life or spirit, truth or reality [...], the essential thing has moved off or on, and refuses to be contained any longer in such ill-fitting vestments as we provide. Nevertheless, we go on perseveringly, conscientiously, constructing our two and thirty chapters after a design which more and more ceases to resemble the vision in our minds. So much of the enormous labour of proving the solidity, the likeness to life, of the story, is not merely labour thrown away but labour misplaced to the extent of blotting out the light of the conception. The writer seems constrained, not by his own free will but by some powerful and unscrupulous tyrant who has him in thrall to provide a plot, to provide comedy, tragedy, love interest and an air of probability. [...] But sometimes [...] we suspect a momentary doubt. [...] Is life like this? Must novels be like this?
>
> Look within and life, it seems, is very far from being "like this." Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engaged with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old; the moment of importance came not here but there; so that if a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style, and perhaps not a single button sewn on as the Bond Street tailors would have it. Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; but a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration of complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible? [...] Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness.[24]

In the introduction he wrote for the 1925 French translation of *Mrs. Dalloway*, Maurois had compared Woolf's questioning of the way the novel represents real-life experience to the Impressionist painters' questioning of traditional artistic rendering of the play of light:

> "It is not true," Monet had declared, "that objects have a form. There is no haystack, cathedral or poplar tree; there is the haystack and the cathedral at a certain hour of the day in a certain light." It is not true, Virginia Woolf

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0008

> reflects in turn, that a character is something to be portrayed externally. A human mind is nothing but a continuous flow of images and memories. If a novelist wants to be truthful, he must be faithful to these shifting images. Thus Virginia Woolf's reflections on the spectacle of life and the works of the past led her towards an impressionist esthetics of the novel.

With all his admiration for Woolf and her generation of writers, however, Maurois does not conceal his misgivings:

> Was it possible to write an entire novel in this manner, to create characters and have them live? There was certainly the *Ulysses* of James Joyce, but with so many remarkable qualities, *Ulysses*, as a novel, was a failure, as Virginia Woolf well knew. [...] More clearly than anyone, Virgina Woolf perceived the danger and the weakness of an impressionism that was no more than that. The artist who persists in trying to capture the moment but is unwilling to recognize the permanent forms under the shifting appearances, is headed for madness and must end up, like the hero of *La Recherche de l'Absolu* or the Monet of the "Nymphéas," trying to fix on the canvas what can never be grasped. An artist cannot exhaust the infinite; he must select, he must accept his limits.[25]

A couple of years later, in his *Essai sur Dickens*, Maurois returned to this theme and laid out his own view of the novel. "What is a novel?" he asked in the section on "Dickens and the Art of the Novel." "Very simply," he responded, "a narrative of fictitious happenings":

> Why do we need such narratives? Because our real life is passed in an incoherent universe. We long for a world subject to the laws of the spirit [*aux lois de l'esprit*], an ordered world; through our senses we know only obscure forces, and beings with confused passions. From the novel we seek a universe which will help us [*un univers de secours*], wherein we can seek emotions without exposing ourselves to the consequences of authentic emotions, find intelligible characters, and a Destiny on a human scale. To fulfil this role, then, it would seem that a novel should contain two elements: on the one hand, an image of life, a story in which we can believe, at least so long as we are reading it, failing which our reading would be wearisome and we should return to ourselves; and on the other hand, an intellectual construction, grouping these natural images according to a human order.[26]

Revealingly, a passage from Nicolson's Byron biography quoted by Maurois to back up his claim that the "new biography" had integrated "the stream of consciousness, so often alluded to by the modern novelist" into biography and that "here we follow the moods of the man, just as we would in one of James Joyce's novels," consists, in fact, of somewhat

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0008

disorderly, but entirely intelligible and coherent reflections.[27] Beyond that, Maurois was evidently not prepared to go. Experimentation and innovation were still, for him, subject to the requirement that they be "designed to bring a closer understanding of reality"[28] and "reality," for him, was still defined as the "permanent forms under the shifting appearances." As the late twentieth-century novelist Michel Droit pointed out, "With his *world subject to the laws of the spirit*, Maurois stands opposed to the majority of contemporary novelists, among whom the spirit is, on the contrary, subject to the chaos and will of the world that surrounds it."[29]

At the same time, it is thoroughly characteristic of Maurois that he never expressed his misgivings about modern literary practices sharply, aggressively, or provocatively but, on the contrary, did his utmost to avoid giving offence or taking—or, at least, being seen to take—a partisan stand. The contrast with his friend Desmond MacCarthy, whose opinions he certainly knew not only from conversations with the English critic but from MacCarthy's published writings, is striking. In a review of Gertrude Stein's 1926 essay *Composition as Explanation* MacCarthy declared that

> more downright nonsense will pass as wonderful to-day than ever before. Respect for the unintelligible in prose and verse inhibits readers who, in other matters, show unmistakable signs of intelligence, from recognizing rubbish when they see it. [...] If you start with a form which can convey no meaning, which ignores syntax, and consists in either repeating the same word or the next that suggests itself while the intelligence is completely in abeyance, it is impossible to develop, and [Miss Stein's] work has shown no development. Miss Stein sprang, fully armed like Minerva, from that part of the human brain which is usually inaudible in waking life, yet can sometimes be overheard jabbering nonsense to itself.[30]

Caught between an old-fashioned, conventional model that had lost its credibility for many readers and become stale and a modern manner in which the reader has to let himself or herself be carried along on "waves" of feelings, sensations, perceptions and—at best—disconnected thoughts, without the structuring support of plot and character, the new novel of the early decades of the twentieth century no longer provided the picture of an intelligible reality that readers had come to expect of the novel and that Maurois, as we saw, believed it was the function of the novel to provide. On the contrary, it reflected and aggravated a contemporary melting away of certainties and a growing feeling of disorientation in the face of forces not amenable to traditional categories

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0008

of analysis and understanding. In an essay on Joyce's *Ulysses* Desmond MacCarthy attributed the rise of a literature in which "everything is made as visible, audible, tangible and sniffable as possible," so that " 'the story' disappears [...] and, in a very real and significant sense 'characters' have disappeared also" to "two influences: the discovery of the importance of the subconscious and the growth of a general scepticism." Inasmuch as the "great point" of the novel as a form—in his view, as in that, he would claim, of most readers—is to combine "depth and panorama," the inner life of individuals and the broad patterns of social relations, the fact that "not a few novelists [...] show a tendency to shirk even as much of the general survey of life as anything resembling a story implies, confining themselves to what is going on in the head of one character during a given space of time," leads MacCarthy to declare himself "uneasy about the future of the novel." Indeed, he has "a strong impression that alert, original men and women are getting heartily sick of the novel."[31]

The experience of World War I with its mass armies and anonymous slaughter on a scale hitherto unknown intensified a sense of disarray and disillusionment with the certainties of the nineteenth century that had already set in by the first decade of the twentieth. "We are in a time of chaos and do not know whether it is the chaos of downfall and ruin or that of a new creation," Lulu von Strauss und Torney, the poetess wife of the influential avant-garde German publisher Eugen Diederichs, wrote in 1921. "On one hand, the mass and the slogan; on the other, the isolated individual, a prey to conflicting forces from both within and without and beset in his own inner being by all the strife of the times. Where is there a foothold, an inward compass, where is there an island rising above the circling waves of the world?"[32] It could be and was argued that the success of the "new biography" was due to the fact that it responded to such feelings of bewilderment and confusion and to the disappearance of "story" and "character" from the work of the most imaginative writers of fiction. That it arose from an experience of crisis—the dissolution of traditional certainties and the loss of the "illusions of the nineteenth century"—was, in fact, the argument of the Dutch scholar Jan Romein in his now classic study of 1946, *De Biografie, een Inleiding*.[33]

Even the events of the seemingly irrational public sphere could be made to appear more intelligible when seen from the biographical point of view. "For Lytton," the French author of a major study of Strachey observes, "history is not only a conflict of impersonal forces, but a conflict of personalities. [...] That is what he told Maurois one day: 'An international

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0008

conference is simply so many men, each with his fixed character, his habits, his neuralgia, his good or bad digestion. The history of the conference, if it could be written, would be not only the analysis of the great confronted interests, but a picture of the mutual actions and reactions of these temperaments on each other.'"[34] Such a history was, in fact, what another Bloomsburyite and writer of biographies, the economist John Maynard Keynes, provided in his study of the negotiations of the Council of Four (Clemenceau, Lloyd George, Orlando and Wilson) in Paris in 1919.[35]

Though its main target was probably Emil Ludwig, the critical interpretation of the popularity of biography in the post-World War I era by the Frankfurt School scholar Siegfried Kracauer is by no means irrelevant to the work of Maurois. "In the chaos of current artistic practices" brought about by the "abolition of the contours of the individual and his antagonists," Kracauer argued, biography is "the only seemingly necessary prose form," since

> every historical figure already contains its own form: it begins at a specific moment, develops through its conflicts with the world, takes on contours and substance, draws back in old age, and passes away. It is a prose form of the established bourgeoisie, which of course has to deny any knowledge and all problems of form that threaten its continued existence. The bourgeoisie feels the power of history in its bones and is all too aware that the individual has become anonymous. Yet these insights [...] do not lead it to draw any conclusions capable of illuminating the current situation.

On the contrary, "in the interest of self-preservation, the bourgeoisie shies away from confronting the situation. [...] As the literary form of the new bourgeoisie, biography is a sign of escape or, to be more precise, evasion." The new biographies "want to get rid of all the [traditional] psychology that was so characteristic of prewar prose but, despite the seeming objectivity of their subject matter, they still employ to some extent the old categories. They throw a suspect individualism out the back door, and then escort officially endorsed individuals through the main entrance back into the bourgeois house."[36] The "new biography," in short, aims to bolster the integrity of the individual, the foundation of bourgeois order, in the face of the disquieting and disorienting modern developments and insights that had discredited the traditional novel and caused the truly modern novel to become a challenge to the reader—the mass, anonymous killings of the Great War, the overwhelming power of impenetrable and uncontrollable historical forces and the role of unconscious drives in the human psyche.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0008

While the left-wing Kracauer's critique is certainly related to his political position, misgivings about the dominant role of the "story" in the new biography, at least insofar as its subjects were literary figures, were also expressed by critics to whom the analysis and the interpretation of texts were the top priority and biography a secondary consideration. Charles Du Bos, as we saw, praised the skill with which his friend Maurois had narrated the life of Shelley but expressed regret that emphasis on the "story" had resulted in neglect of Shelley the poet. Paul Souday, the author of studies of Proust, Gide and Valéry, acknowledged that in the field of biography "M. Maurois is a born master," but he too faulted him for concentrating on the individual's "story" at the expense of his literary achievement. The nineteenth-century critic Sainte-Beuve, Souday suggested, was right to view biography "as merely one of the elements of criticism." In contrast, "the tendency today is toward the fictionalized biography, the sort that makes the sentimental adventures of the subject more important than his work. Even in 'Ariel' there is little consideration of Shelley's poetry. In spite of the charm of this entrancing work and the tact that has kept M. Maurois from indulging in the inventions that please other biographers and cause them to degenerate into mere story-tellers, I believe in the older conception of the art of biography." The criticism of the poet and novelist Georges Batault, as reported in a *New York Times* article, struck a similar note, albeit probably not uninfluenced by his well-known anti-Semitism. (He was the author of *Le Problème juif* [Paris: Plon, 1921], a classic anti-Semitic text.) Alleging that the "great favor and success" enjoyed by Maurois in England and America had "aroused suspicion in France," Batault held that in modern times "literary production has tended to become simply a branch of commerce, subject to the tyranny of economic laws," so that "the ideal point of perfection would be the Americanization of intellectual production." In this situation, according to Batault, "Maurois was clever enough to invent just what the public wanted. [. . .] He turned the tricks of the novelist to the trade of the biographer. He presented only the easy, the entertaining, the agreeable." Thus, while Maurois was "a writer of incontestable talent, of grace, elegance and flowing style, he has written the picturesque story of Shelley's troubled life, completely ignoring Shelley the poet." Predictably, "readers lapped it up."[37] The Jew Maurois, in short, had a nose for what would sell and tailored his writing accordingly. The common thread in the three criticisms, which come from writers of different points of view, is that the new biographer's focus on

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0008

constructing a coherent story of individual life has been a response to a demand on the part of the reading public for reassuringly intelligible ("easy," "entertaining," and "agreeable") narratives and characters.

Even in our own day Kracauer's analysis of the popularity of biography has lost neither its punch nor its relevance. In an article entitled "L'Illusion biographique" that appeared in 1986, one of the leading sociologists of our time, the late Pierre Bourdieu, emphasized the constructed character of the idea of a "life" and argued that it responded to a "concern to give meaning [. . .], to discover a logic at once retrospective and prospective, a consistency and a constancy [in an individual life], by identifying intelligible relations, such as that of efficient or final cause and effect, between successive states, which are thus reconstituted as *stages* in a necessary development." In contrast, in Bourdieu's view, "it is significant that a questioning of the vision of life as an existence endowed with meaning, in the sense of both intelligibility and direction [*la vie comme existence dotée de sens, au double sens de signification et de direction*], has coincided with the abandonment in the modern novel of the structuring principle of linear narrative." Bourdieu goes on to quote the novelist Alain Robbe-Grillet: "The coming of the modern novel is directly related to the discovery that the real is discontinuous, made up of elements juxtaposed without rhyme or reason, each one of which is unique, and all the more difficult to grasp as they emerge quite unpredictably, randomly, and haphazardly." A sceptical view of biography even made its way into the columns of the *New York Times* in 1985 in a review by a respected English literature scholar of the revised one-volume edition of Leon Edel's classic biography of Henry James:

> Biography, as everyone knows, is a species of imaginative writing that tempts even the most exact chronicler to aspire toward the visionary freedom of the artist. We no sooner discern a shape in someone's history than we impose our own design on the flux of life. [. . .] We decide, with a necessary arbitrariness, that [. . .] this life, like a novel, had a "plot" with dips and peaks, and even a "theme." We select from our materials what conforms to these and discard what does not. More, we let ourselves speculate about things invisible and unrecorded [. . .] in which we are willing to believe, so that our story will make sense.[38]

Like the biographies, the numerous essays—of thirty to forty pages each, enhanced by well-chosen photographic portraits—that Maurois devoted in the early 1960s to contemporary writers, many of them personal friends, are beautifully crafted, based on familiarity with the

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0008

authors and their works, generous and sympathetic without flattery.[39] They rarely offer the reader an original perspective on their subjects, however, let alone question the very coherency of their subjects in the manner, according to Robbe-Grillet, of the modern novelist—or of modern philosophers such as Jacques Derrida. "Addressed to a [. . .] popular audience, they say for the most part all the easy enthusiastic things that make a substitute for actual reading," the critic R.P. Blackmur wrote of an earlier collection (1935) of Maurois' essays on British writers, "and they take for granted nothing but the hard things that come only with slow knowledge and intimate attention."[40] Given that the essays of the 1960s, like those of the 1930s, were intended for a general public and that most of the writers, moreover, were still alive, Maurois' disinclination to probe deeply, challenge prevailing ideas and judgments, and risk offending is understandable. This reticence, however, is characteristic in greater or lesser degree, as we have suggested, of all his writing. His portrait of Disraeli, for instance—as an individual whose foreign origins in a family of Venetian Jews was never in contradiction with his patriotic attachment to British traditions, and as a statesman who successfully combined conservatism with responsiveness to change and creative literary talent with passionate engagement in politics—was in many respects, as Maurois himself acknowledged, an enhanced version of his own image.[41] As in Maurois' view of his relation to Alain, as in the early *Dialogues sur le commandement*, the basic structure and intelligibility of Maurois' biography is secured by the rhetorical trope of antithesis—by representing "the two lobes of my brain"—whether the antithesis appears more or less successfully resolved, as in Disraeli's personal life and political career, or remains unresolved, as in his conflict with the rigidly principled Gladstone. And, like Maurois' own *Memoirs*, while by no means uncritical or lacking in perceptiveness, *Disraeli* never gives the reader the sense of penetrating far below the surface of things, either personal or historical, into unfamiliar or perplexing depths.

In form as in content, Maurois' writing is lucid, orderly and balanced. As the author of the London *Times* obituary observed, Maurois' "style was invariably clear and simple and although most of his works were translated into English—among many other languages—they are extremely easy to read in the original French and are thus invaluable for students, particularly as they are at the same time eminently readable." "The Maurois biographies," in the words of another commentator, "are

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0008

charming and effortless reading."[42] Maurois himself proclaimed that his overriding aim was to write clearly and intelligibly:

> I have attached the greatest importance to clarity. [...] My aim is to limit myself, as far as possible, to a vocabulary that is intelligible to everyone. [...] I have never sought to develop a rare or precious vocabulary. Good writers (Chateaubriand) and not so good writers (the Goncourt brothers) attached surprising importance to the enrichment of their verbal repertory. I don't detest such efforts in the works of others, provided they don't result in preciosity. [...] For my part, I am content to use the words of everyday language. [...] I have difficulty understanding the frightful labor to which a Flaubert subjects himself. The reader senses the enormous effort and is bothered by it. All grace lies in ease. I try only to say what I have to say and to convey the movement of my thought. [...] There are people who ought not to read anything I have written, since none of it will please them. Those, for example, who confound extravagance and originality. "Do the people who charge Maurois with avoiding the odd or the absurd really imagine that it would be any more difficult for him than for anybody else to dress himself up in these modish styles?" Jules Romains once wrote. I would gladly have placed a sign at the entrance to my too long row of books: *Amateurs of Preciosity Keep Out*. For, as in the age of Molière, we have our *Précieuses* and their Trissotins, among whom obscurity passes for profundity. I do not seek such readers; they will only find me irritating.[43]

Writing of Maurois' early love letters to Janine Szymanski, the frail and beautiful young woman who became Émile Herzog's first wife, his biographer, Dominique Bona, notes that "Émile a—déjà—un style limpide, qu'il affinera par la suite, mais qui gardera ce premier timbre—cet effet de velours à l'oreille" ["Émile has—already—a limpid style, which he will refine in the course of time, but which will always retain the timbre it had at the outset—the impression of velvet on the ear"].[44]

Perhaps Maurois wrote *too* well and too clearly. "Alas, I am not a difficult writer," he remarked with his usual sceptical insight.[45] Perhaps he approached both his readers and his characters (including himself as the main character in his *Memoirs*) with too much courtesy and deference. "Conformist," he wrote of himself in 1929. "*The very opposite of a rebel*" ["*Exactement le contraire d'un révolté*," in italics in the text]. Whence the need to be a good golfer if I find myself among golfers, a good philosopher among philosophers, a good manufacturer among people in industry." This conformism (the "Practical Man" again) was balanced, according to one critic, by a desire for justice that can only have been strengthened by Maurois' lifelong attachment to and deep respect for

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0008

Alain (the "Just Man"). The concern for social justice, according to the same critic, is reflected in the writer's moderate political positions.[46] In the end, however, the balancing of the two—the practical desire to conform and the principled desire to be just—may well have led to the very middle-of-the-road stance that makes Maurois' work both extremely readable and unchallenging. As Lask observed in his review of the *Memoirs*, this intelligent, temperate, cultivated writer is never uncivil or abrasive; he is always pleasant company. Another American critic had already observed in 1930 that while Maurois "has an unmistaking eye for human weakness, it is a tolerant eye. He has a sense of humor, which is not particularly reverent, which can sometimes be wicked, but which is invariably good-natured." Similarly, while he conscientiously provides reassuring documentation concerning his sources, he is always careful to "pull down the scaffolding and [. . .] present to the reader the completed house and nothing more." His book on Byron, according to the same critic, "is a good book precisely because he has done all this work and then concealed it."[47] The reader, in short, is spared the indecorous, potentially troubling spectacle of the book's gestation and of the messy material from which its comfortingly coherent design was produced.

At one point, the facility with which Maurois assembled already shaped and worked over materials into new, more artful designs even lent some credibility to an embarrassing and malicious accusation of plagiarism. The phenomenal success and seemingly inexhaustible productivity of the writer had already provoked envy and resentment in some quarters when in 1928 the critic André Billy suggested that Maurois might be a suitable candidate for election to the Académie française. Suddenly, a virulent article with covert but hardly mistakable anti-Semitic undertones appeared in the *Mercure de France*, signed Auriant, the pseudonym used by one of the journal's editors (usually identified as the Egyptian-born Alexandre Hadjivassiliou, the author, over the years from 1936 to his death in 1990, of a dozen books), charging Maurois with having abridged and "mutilated" Edward Dowden's *Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (1896) and W.F. Monypenny's six-volume *Life of Benjamin Disraeli* (1910–1912)—"first-class works, beautiful in themselves and deserving of our respect and admiration," but completely unknown to French readers—for his biographies of the poet and the statesman-writer, and with having plagiarized Frank Harris's *Oscar Wilde, His Life and Confessions* (1918) for the portrait of Wilde in his well-received *Études anglaises*. Selected short passages from the English authors and from Maurois were placed side

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0008

by side as evidence of Maurois' dishonest practices. These were, in fact, completely unconnected fragments, usually of a factual nature. Maurois replied acknowledging that he had indeed made use of these works, as it was entirely appropriate, indeed requisite for him to do, and as he had himself indicated by listing them among his sources, but pointing out at the same time that the writing and interpretation were entirely his own and that, in addition, he had had access to materials unknown or not available to his English predecessors.

Auriant returned to the attack a month later, adding other instances of alleged plagiarism in some of Maurois' short stories and even in *Le Voyage au pays des Articoles*. This was followed by a two-page letter from Frank Harris in support of the earlier accusation. Maurois again responded and this time produced, both in the original English and in a French translation, an allegedly unsolicited letter in which Sir Edmund Gosse, the eminent British man of letters evoked as an authority by Auriant in his attacks, tells Maurois that "your English readers view with indignation the perfidious attacks which are made upon you." "I hope you will rest assured," Gosse goes on, "that those in England who are best fitted to form a judgment, regard your treatment of English themes with admiration. Your *Disraeli* has been read in this country by no readers so enthusiastically as by those most deeply versed in the history and literature of the time." As if to undercut this reply to Auriant's second attack, the *Mercure* appended to it a letter from a former student at the Lycée in Rouen attended by Maurois. This individual recalled discovering that an essay by "Émile Herzog, autrement dit M. André Maurois," which their teacher had held up as a model to be followed, turned out to be a collage of passages taken from La Fontaine, Racine and La Bruyère. "I believe one should energetically pursue shameless borrowers and practitioners of scissors-and-paste," he concluded, "be their names Stendhal, Anatole France or André Maurois." In contrast to them, Maurois' fellow-student held up the example of Flaubert. "He too informed himself scrupulously, but in all his work one will not find a single sentence that is not, wholly and uniquely *his*." This "attack" at least put Maurois in very good company.[48]

Crude as Auriant's arguments may have been, the Stanford professor Georges Lemaître conceded in one of the earliest critical studies of Maurois that, though "undoubtedly Maurois has in no case consciously adapted to his own use fragments of some other author's work, as he has been unjustly accused of doing [...], in view of similarities here and

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0008

there, it seems possible that certain half-conscious reminiscences may have found their way into his most original compositions. In fact, the true originality of André Maurois lies much less in the invention of completely new, unused material, than in the thoroughly personal organization and interpretation of the elements ready to his hand." Lemaître might also have mentioned Maurois' habit of recycling his own work and reusing substantial passages from one piece of writing in another or republishing entire essays in different collective volumes.[49]

The excitement over the *Mercure de France* articles subsided rapidly, most critics having concluded, according to Lemaître, that Maurois had "in no case violated the strictest rules of literary ethics," and the high regard in which the author and public figure was almost universally held was not diminished. Maurois retained a popularity that rested largely on his ability to provide the public with subtle, intelligent and reassuringly intelligible portraits of people and situations in elegant and well-crafted language. The charge was revived, however, in the collaborationist press during the German occupation.[50]

Notes

1 *Memoirs 1885–1967*, p. 215. Lucien Romier was subsequently minister of state under both Darlan and Laval. Maurois on his "politeness" in "A Holiday Diary, 1928," *A Private Universe* (as in I, note 17), p. 14. The attitude of Maurois' mentor Alain (Émile Chartier) to "excess" and "politeness" was complex. He valued "politesse" for its capacity to create and sustain a feeling of community, as in a dance, or at a Latin mass, where the very "emptiness" of the signs (the Latin no one understands) makes of the experience "le moment de la concorde." At the same time politeness "absolutely excludes any difficult or extraordinary undertaking" and discourages hard thinking "not for fear of the thoughts themselves but for fear of the ugly and stupid agitation that is the common effect of anything controversial" (Alain, *Propos*, ed. Maurice Savin, Preface by André Maurois [Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pleïade, 1958], pp. 977–978 ["Propos," dated 20 December 1930] and p. 892 ["Propos," dated 5 December 1929]). Cf. Bergson on "politesse" as "the ability to put oneself in the place of others," a way of "expressing one's opinions without offending those of others," "an art that consists of knowing how to listen, of seeking to understand, of being able, when the occasion requires it, to enter into the mindset of the other, of exercising, in short, even in discussions of political, religious and moral issues, that politeness which is often deemed dispensable outside the domain of the indifferent

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0008

or the trivial" ("La Politesse: Discours de distribution des prix au lycée de Clermont-Ferrand, 30 juillet 1885," in Henri Bergson, *Écrits et paroles*, ed. R.M. Mossé-Bastide [Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1957], pp. 57–68, on pp. 60, 67). See also note 43 below.

2 Thomas Lask, review of the English translation of Maurois' *Memoirs 1885–1967* in *New York Times*, 18 August 1970, p. 33. As early as 1932, Lask's judgment had been anticipated, albeit in less negative terms, by the *New York Times* reviewer of the collection of essays entitled *A Private Universe*. Maurois, the reviewer wrote, "experiments with environments and ideas as he comes upon them, and is able to reject without indignation or discourtesy. Indeed, he suspects that politeness is his 'most dangerous weakness.' [...] M. Maurois is no child of revolt. [...] He is in tranquil possession of his philosophic fortress, expects no counter-attack, and even lets down the moat and wanders out to pick daisies" (R.L. Duffus, "André Maurois's Serene Cosmos," *New York Times*, 8 May 1932).

3 Du Bos, *Journal* (as in III, note 4), vol. 1 (1921–1923), pp. 234–235, 322–314 (12 February and 26 June 1923); Maurois, *Memoirs 1885–1967*, p. 368.

4 Maurois' avoidance of anything that might radically destabilize the status quo, his lack of truly great creative power, was a recurrent theme, as we shall have occasion to note, of his critics on the extreme right and left. It is also a theme, however, of less ill-disposed critics, as in the perceptive comments of Jean-Maurice Nivat:

> At bottom, Maurois has shown himself to have less the gifts of a great creative artist than the intelligence of a populariser and the subtle and keen insight of a moralist. [...] He knows how to lay out a question, how to present Proust and help his readers to understand him, how to sum up a chapter in English history; he has a taste for a judicious and reasonable 'art of living' and for the fine-tuned and ingenious formulae in which that wisdom can be expressed. [...] Nevertheless, he is not a man to plunge into an excessively systematic esthetics or psychology [...] He prefers to keep his balance and he understands all the arguments too well to make an exclusive choice of any one. (Joseph Majault, Jean-Maurice Nivat, Charles Geronimi, *Littérature de notre temps*, *Écrivains français*, Receuil 2 [Paris and Tournai: Casterman 1966], pp. 145–146)

5 "Au fond l'idée que la personnalité est loin d'être chose aussi simple qu'on l'avait parfois imaginée domine toute la littérature moderne." "For himself," Maurois goes on, "an individual is nothing but the juxtaposition of the successive images he forms of himself." Nonetheless, Maurois does not give up the notion of a stable personality. He sees it not as a given, but as the result of a rational and moral act, an act of will: "It is only by a coup d'État that we decide to be ourselves. [...] Some people never emerge from the

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0008

indetermination of primitive beginnings; others, after painful experiences, decree that henceforth they have made their choice. The external world will continue to be a screen on which images pass without rhyme or reason. They, however, will be *faithful.* [. . .] In short, it depends on us whether we will have a self" (interview with Frédéric Lefèvre in *Nouvelles Littéraires*, 1 May 1926, reprinted in *Une Heure avec* [as in III, note 3], pp. 19–21).

6 The following is an excerpt from the passage Maurois cited from Woolf in his *Aspects of Biography* (p. 33).

> "The aim of biography," said Sir Sidney Lee, who had perhaps read and written more Lives than any man of his time [Lee succeeded Woolf's father, Leslie Stephen, as editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, to which he contributed some 800 articles, and was the author of biographies of Queen Victoria, Edward VII, and Great Englishmen of the Sixteenth Century—L.G.], "is the truthful transmission of personality," and no single sentence could more neatly split up into two parts the whole problem of biography as it presents itself to us to-day. On the one hand, there is truth; on the other there is personality. And if we think of truth as something of granite-like solidity, and of personality as something of rainbow-like intangibility and reflect that the aim of biography is to weld these two into one seamless whole, we shall admit that the problem is a stiff one and that we need not wonder if biographers have for the most part failed to solve it.

On Woolf's pessimism concerning biography, see *Granite and Rainbow* (as in I, note 4), p. 155.

7 *Aspects of Biography*, pp. 43–44.

8 Ibid., p. 12. "I do truly believe that in work of this kind, one must discipline oneself to read everything. It is not in the grand official biographies, but in the memoirs of some unknown individual, some obscure courtesan, that one will suddenly come upon the precious, unique detail that reveals a completely new aspect of the character one is studying. One must be patient and diligent" (Maurois in interview with Frédéric Lefèvre, 1 May 1926, *Une Heure avec* [as in III, note 3], pp. 29–30.

9 *A Voyage to the Island of the Articoles*, trans. David Garnett (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1929), p. 57.

10 *Aspects of Biography*, p. 26.

11 "Préfaces littéraires," *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 15, p. 261, originally published in English as introduction to *Letters of Marcel Proust*, trans. Mina Curtiss (London: Chatto and Windus, 1950).

12 "Le Biographe et ses personnages: vérité et poésie" (as in I, note 20), p. 11. Cf. a remark in the interview with Frédéric Lefèvre of 1 May 1926: "Fundamentally, I am far more tempted by the novel than by biography. It is very hard to give a sort of unity and beauty to a real life. It resists. It is

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0008

what it is. It flies off in every direction" (*Une Heure avec* [as in III, note 3], p. 30).

13 Maurois, *Études américaines* (as in I, note 15), p. 121.

14 *Aspects of Biography*, p. 55; "The Modern Biographer," *Yale Review*, 1927 (as in III, note 8), p. 241. In a recent article in the *New York Times* (25 November 2012) Stacy Schiff, the popular contemporary author of biographies of Maurois' friend Saint-Exupéry and of Cleopatra, describes biography in terms similar to those of Maurois:

> The biographer has two lives: the one she leads and the one she ultimately understands. The first is a muddle of misgivings and misapprehensions, hesitations and half-chances. [. . .] The second—the life the biographer pins to the page—has themes. It has chapters, a beginning, middle and end. Intentions align with actions, which bloom into logical consequences. The biographer is as clear-eyed about the second as she is clueless about the first. [. . .] Reality does not easily give up meaning; it's the biographer's job to clobber it into submission. You're meant not only to tame it but to extract substance, to identify cause and axiomatic effect. ("The Dual Lives of the Biographer," *Sunday Review*, p. 8)

15 *New York Times*, 14 July 1929.

16 Strachey, we are told, "is by common agreement to be considered as the father and master of modern biography" and this means that he "is no idol-worshipper" but "on the contrary [. . .] a hero-wrecker, an idol-breaker," whose aim is "to treat a great man as a human being" and bring "the statue down from its pedestal." But "is this new type of biography written for the pleasure of destroying heroes? If it were so, it would be a rather despicable art. Humanity has always found a source of consolation in the lives of its great men, and one ought to consider very seriously before one destroys a perhaps useful illusion. It cannot be denied that in some instances the new biographer has overdone it. Strachey himself must be admitted in some instances to be a shade nastier than is really fair" ("The Modern Biographer," *Yale Review*, 1927 [as in III, note 8], pp. 231, 236–237).

17 Desmond MacCarthy, "Lytton Strachey" (*c.* 1934) in his *Memories* [as in I, note 15], pp. 31–49, at p. 31.

18 Cited in Helmut Scheuer, *Biographie* (as in I, note 6), pp. 154, 160.

19 *Wege der Kultur* [Munich: Drei Masken Verlag, 1930], pp. 38–44.

20 Leo Löwenthal, *Literature and Mass Culture* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Books, 1984), chapter 5, "The Biographical Fashion," p. 189. (This essay was written in the 1930s.) In similar vein, the British socialist and political theorist Harold Laski: Maurois "ministers to those who want the elements of culture without the need to stir up the muddy waters of scholarship" (cited by Alan Whitman in his obituary of Maurois in *New*

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0008

York Times, 10 October 1967). As early as 1929, Emmanuel Berl, discussing Maurois' biography of Shelley, in *Mort de la pensée bourgeoise. I: La Littérature* (Paris: Grasset): "The success of fictionalised biography, a false, hybrid genre, would be incomprehensible if it did not satisfy certain bad instincts: the taste for easily absorbed and inexact information, the reduction of history to anecdote of guaranteed innocuousness" (p. 65).

21 Desmond MacCarthy, "Lytton Strachey," in his *Memories* [as in I, note 15], p. 31. The essay on James Joyce (dated 1941) on pp. 112–120 is testimony to the puzzlement and discomfort with which even a highly cultivated writer and critic responded to modern fiction.

22 Cited in David Novarr, *The Lines of Life: Theories of Biography, 1880–1970* (as in I, note 6), pp. 52–53. Forster was likewise taken to task for his conservative vision of the novel and his incomprehension of Joyce by Cyril Connolly in MacCarthy's monthly *Life and Letters*, 2 (April, 1929), pp. 273–274.

23 Cited in Collet, *Jacques-Émile Blanche* (as in IV, note 34), pp. 300–301, 302. Before publication of the complete text of *Finnegans Wake* (1939), *Anna Livia Plurabelle* had appeared, along with other parts of Joyce's work, in the Parisian literary magazines *Transatlantic Review* and *Transition.* Blanche's small portrait of Woolf is in the Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design (Daniel Rosenfeld, ed., *European Painting and Sculpture ca. 1770–1937 in the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design* [Providence, R.I., 1991], p. 214).

24 Virginia Woolf, "Modern Novels," first version in *Times Literary Supplement*, 10 April 1919, revised version ("Modern Fiction") in her *The Common Reader*, 1st series (London: Hogarth Press, 1925); quoted by Maurois in "La jeune littérature anglaise," *Études anglaises* (Paris: Grasset, 1927), pp. 368–370, in a free translation into French, with no reference to the original source (in fact, the revised version). I have reverted here to Woolf's original instead of translating Maurois's adaptation. Maurois borrowed heavily for his 1927 essay from his introduction to the French translation of *Mrs. Dalloway* (Paris: Stock, 1925; reprint in Virginia Woolf, *L'Oeuvre romanesque* [Paris: Stock, 1973], 3 vols, vol. 1, pp. 169–173).

25 Introduction to the original 1925 French translation of *Mrs. Dalloway* in Virginia Woolf, *L'Oeuvre romanesque*, (1973), vol. 1, pp. 171–172. To the journalist Frédéric Lefèvre who asked him how, given his deep historical scepticism, he could write biographies, Maurois replied: "I could answer your question by invoking a paradox put forward by Groethuysen when he began a biographical study by declaring: 'This is an imaginary portrait, like all historical portraits …'. But the truth is that I do try—timidly, my Goodness! and without illusions—to reach truth." This statement is immediately moderated, however, by the sceptical clarification that "what I aim for, is to get to know a character in the past as well (and, consequently, as poorly) as a

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0008

living character whom I think I know well" (interview in *Nouvelles Littéraires*, 1 May 1926, in *Une Heure avec* [as in III, note 3], p.29).

26 Maurois, *Un Essai sur Dickens* (Paris: Grasset, 1927), pp. 125–126, quoted from the English translation by Hamish Miles, *Dickens* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1934), p. 109. *Un univers de secours* has the meaning of "a substitute world" or "an escape world."

27 See "The Modern Biographer" (as in III, note 8), pp. 234–235.

28 *Memoirs 1885–1967*, p. 411.

29 Michel Droit, *André Maurois* (Paris and Brussels: Éditions Universitaires, 1953), p. 39.

30 Desmond MacCarthy, *Criticism* (London and New York: Putnam, 1932), pp. 260, 266.

31 Ibid., pp. 297, 301; see also "Notes on the novel," ibid., p. 172, and a 1941 article on James Joyce in MacCarthy's *Memories* (as in I, note 15), pp. 112–120. For a different interpretation of the "difficulty" of modern writing, see Q.D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1938), pp. 215–234.

32 "Wir stehen in einer Zeit des Chaos und wissen noch nicht, ist es Chaos des Untergangs oder der Neuschöpfung. Hie Masse und Schlagwort, dort der isolierte Einzelne, preisgegeben aller kämpfenden Gewalten des Innen und Aussen, alle Zerrissenheiten der Zeit in der eigenen Seele austragend. Wo ist hier ein Halt, ein inwendiger Kompass, wo die Insel über den kreisenden Wassern der Welt?" (Cited in Helmut Scheuer, *Biographie* [as in I, note 4], p. 155). In similar vein, Karl Jaspers in his *Die geistige Situation der Zeit* (1932) writes: "What is really happening eludes our comprehension. We are voyaging upon an uncharted sea, unable to reach a shore from which a clear outlook on the whole would be attainable" (cited from K. Jaspers, *Man in the Modern Age*, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul [New York: Henry Holt, 1933], p 33). The mood was both expressed and aggravated by literary and artistic movements such as Dada and Zaum (literally "beyond the reasoning mind, *za-um*"), the Futurist literary program initiated in 1913 in Russia by Velimir Khlebnikov and Aleksei Kruchenykh and aimed at creating a language which "does not have any definite meaning, a transrational language," in the words of Kruchenykh. Roland Barthes' much later distinction between "écrivants" and "écrivains" was already fully anticipated by Dada and Zaum. See also Christoph Gradmann, *Historische Bellettristik* (as in I, note 4):

> The causes of the boom [in the production and sale of biographies] are obvious. First, the popularity of modern biographies is to be seen as a reaction of the bourgeois reading public to the trauma of the World War. History as it appeared in the available national patterns had been experienced as catastrophic and ideas of progress, common before the war, no longer held. In this perspective the boom in biography marked a flight away from national histories, now seen as senseless,

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0008

> and toward the zero point of complete individualization. History was intelligible only in the span of an individual life. [. . .] Second, the boom in biography needs to be seen as a symptom and instrument of mass education and as the sign of an interest in history that the work of professional historians was less and less capable of satisfying. Biography, mostly written by non-professional historians, became at this time the classic form of popular historiography. (p. 17)

33 See the German translation, *Die Biographie: Einführung in ihre Geschichte und ihre Problematik* (Bern: A. Francke, 1948), pp. 64–71 *et passim*.

34 Gabriel Merle, *Lytton Strachey (1880–1932)* (Lille: Atelier de reproduction des thèses; Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1980), p. 696.

35 John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (London: Macmillan, 1919), chapter III, and again in *Essays in Biography* (London: Macmillan, 1933), pp. 3–30.

36 Siegfried Kracauer, "Biography as an Art Form of the New Bourgeoisie" ["Die Biographie als neubürgerliche Kunstform," 1930] in *The Mass Ornament*, ed. and trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 101–105.

37 Souday in *New York Times*, 3 February 1929; Batault cited in *New York Times*, 17 February 1929. Anti-Semitism seems to have played a role also both in Paul Morand's claim that the aim of the new biography "made fashionable by the embittered (Lytton Strachey, a pederast) or the humiliated (Jews: Maurois, Emil Ludwig, Feuchtwanger, Zweig, etc.) is to debase outstanding men and destroy the masses' belief in heroes" (*Journal inutile*, vol. 1, p. 171 [8 April 1969])—an aim in fact explicitly repudiated by Maurois (see note 16 above)—and in the satisfaction with which Morand observed the decline of the genre in the 1970s. "What has become of all those famous biographies of the pre-War years by the Stefan Zweigs, the Emil Ludwigs, the André Maurois, the Philippe Erlangers—all those dime-store products of Jewish know-how [*ces produits Uniprix du savoir-faire juif*]?" (*Journal inutile*, vol. 2, p. 541 [3 June 1975]). Jews and "pederasts" were commonly denounced by the radical Right in France as responsible for and symbols of the country's alleged decline. See also on the new biography as "la revanche de la bourgeoisie contre l'héroisme" ["the bourgeoisie's revenge against heroism"]. Emmanuel Berl, *Mort de la pensée bourgeoise* (Paris: Grasset, 1929), p. 66.

38 Pierre Bourdieu, "L'Illusion biographique," *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, 62/63 (1986), pp. 69–72, on pp. 69–70. The Robbe-Grillet quotation is from his *Le Miroir qui revient* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1984), p. 208. The *New York Times* review ("The Essence of the Master," *New York Times*, 24 November 1985) was by Millicent Bell, Professor of English at Boston University.

39 *De Proust à Camus* (1963) and *De Gide à Sartre* (1965) [as in I, note 6].

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0008

40 Review of *Prophets and Poets* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1935; orig. French, *Magiciens et logiciens* [Paris: Grasset, 1935]) in *The Nation*, 142 (15 January 1936), p. 79.

41 I felt that through Disraeli I could express a political doctrine which was exactly what I was seeking—I mean a democratic conservatism, a combination of a great respect for tradition and for all that humanity has accomplished in the past, with a care for the happiness of the multitude and a desire for orderly reform. Being unable, for very many reasons, to lead a life of political activity myself, I took a passionate pleasure in joining in the struggle by donning the mask of a face that appealed to me. Here you begin to realize, I think, what I understand by biography as a means of expression. (*Aspects of Biography*, p. 110)

"Like me, he was a Jew, and was as attached to England as I to France; no doubt that helped me to understand him" ("Remarques d'André Maurois," following the chapter "L'Art du biographe" in Jacques Suffel, *André Maurois, avec des remarques par André Maurois* [as in I, note 15], p. 95).

42 John Bakeless, *André Maurois: A Study of the Author of "Byron" and "Disraeli"* (New York: Appleton, n.d. [1930]), p. 11. In similar vein the tribute paid to him shortly after his death by an old friend, the writer Jacques de Lacretelle: "Maurois has no literary mannerisms and uses no tricks. For fifty years, he has been an educator of the French thanks to his moral conscience, his hard work, and the beautiful simplicity of his writing. The preferred topics of his teaching have been literature, history, ethics, criticism and understanding of other peoples. But he fulfilled this task playfully and without pedantry. [. . .] Clarity of mind, language that aims to be intelligible to everyone, a liberal rationalism that shuns violence" (Jacques de Lacretelle, *Portraits d'autrefois et figures d'aujourd'hui* [Paris: Perrin, 1973], pp. 293–294).

43 J'ai attaché une importance capitale à la clarté. [. . .] Je cherche à m'en tenir, autant que possible, à un vocabulaire intelligible pour tous. [. . .] Je n'ai jamais essayé de me faire un vocabulaire rare et précieux. De bons auteurs (Chateaubriand) et de moins bons (les frères Goncourt) attachaient une surprenante importance à l'enrichissement de leur trésor verbal. Je ne hais pas de telles recherches dans les oeuvres des autres, pourvu qu'elles n'aillent pas à la préciosité. [. . .] Pour moi je me contente des mots du langage courant. [. . .] Je comprends mal le labeur effroyable que s'impose un Flaubert. [. . .] Le lecteur sent l'effort et il en est gêné. Toute grâce est aisance. Je cherche seulement à dire ce que j'ai à dire et à conserver le mouvement de la pensée. [. . .] Il y a des gens qui ne devraient lire aucun de mes écrits, parce qu'ils ne peuvent les aimer. Tels, par exemple, ceux qui confondent originalité et extravagance. "Ceux qui reprochent à Maurois," écrivit un jour Jules Romains, "son

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0008

> manque d'étrangeté ou d'absurdité, s'imaginent-ils qu'il aurait plus de peine qu'un autre à se travestir de ces vertus à la mode?" Volontiers j'aurais placé, à l'entrée de ma trop longue rangée d'ouvrages, un écriteau: *Interdit aux Précieuses*. Car nous avons, comme au temps de Molière, nos Précieuses et leurs Trissotins, qui confondent obscurité et profondeur. Je ne souhaite pas ces lecteurs-là; je ne puis que les irriter. (*Portrait d'un ami qui s'appelait moi* [as in III note 23], pp. 104, 106–107, 117–118)

Maurois' contrast of "frightful labour" on the one hand, "grace" and "ease" or freedom of movement on the other is characteristic of the ideal of "politesse" that dominated his generation and that some scholars have identified as reflecting a bourgeois infatuation with aristocratic values; see, for instance, Robert Muchembled, *La Société policée. Politique et politesse en France du XVI^e^ au XX^e^ siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 1998) and the forthcoming work of Mahalia Gayle, *An Imperilled Inheritance: The Decline of Politeness in 20th Century French Literature*. The positive aspect of respect for "la convenance" or propriety in the plastic arts (and presumably in the literary arts also) is underlined by Marc Fumaroli in his *L'État culturel* (Paris: Éditions de Fallois, 1991):

> The word propriety [*convenance*], compromised and degraded in French by its use in the plural, is nevertheless, along with the word property, one of the most profound words in our language. The principle it conveys was a familiar one in the France of old, as in most traditional cultures. Close in meaning to harmony, even accommodation and decency, in tune with the Delphic maxim "Nothing in excess," it is associated with the *esprit de finesse* [as distinguished by Pascal from the *esprit de géométrie*—LG]. All rules of art are sterile when *convenance* is not observed. For *convenance* concerns not only the successful correspondence with each other of all the component parts of a work of art, but its appropriateness to its intended viewers and to the site where it is intended to be displayed. (pp. 67–68)

44 Bona, *Il n'y a qu'un amour* (as in II, note 1), p. 45.

45 *Portrait d'un ami qui s'appelait moi* [as in II, note 20), p. 119.

46 For the quotation—taken from a little book Maurois wrote on his native Rouen (*Rouen* [Paris: Gallimard, 1929], pp. 83–84)—and the comment on it, see Maurice Roya, *André Maurois* (Paris: La Caravelle, 1934), pp. 14–15. Robert de Saint-Jean, the journalist and long-time lover of the Franco-American writer Julien Green, reports having had a conversation with Maurois on 1 November 1928, in the course of which Maurois made a similar profession of conservatism. In allowing Stendhal to influence him in the novels written before *Climats*, Maurois told Saint-Jean, "I had chosen a bad master, for Stendhal was in revolt against his time and the society of his time, and that is not my case. I accept the existing order" (Robert de Saint-Jean, *Journal d'un journaliste* [Paris: Grasset, 1974], p. 27).

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0008

47 Bakeless, *André Maurois*, pp. 9, 22.

48 Auriant, "Un Écrivain original. M. André Maurois," *Mercure de France*, 202 (1 March 1928), pp. 55–73; André Maurois, "Lettre," *Mercure de France,* 203 (1 April 1928), pp. 298–323; Auriant, "Un écrivain original," in the section "Notes et documents littéraires," *Mercure de France* (15 April 1928), pp. 452–472; Maurois, "Une lettre de M. André Maurois" (dated 15 April 1928) in the section "Notes et documents littéraires," *Mercure de France* (1 May 1928), pp. 716–719. It is not hard to discern an anti-Semitic undertone in Auriant's opening paragraph: "M. André Maurois is a clever man [*un homme habile*]. He has an excellent business sense. He succeeds in everything he undertakes, in literature as in industry. [. . .] With equal success, M. André Maurois turns out textiles and cloths of all kinds, woollen and flannel, in Elbeuf, and books in Paris. Fortune and fame favour those with audacity." The same note—literature as the debased merchandise of industrial mass-production and Jewish (or American-style) "business"—was sounded in connection with Maurois by the notoriously anti-Semitic Georges Batault around the same time and by Maurois' sometime friend Paul Morand almost fifty years later; see note 37 above.

49 Georges Lemaître, *André Maurois* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1939), pp. 73–74. See also, on the controversy, pp. 21–22. As an example of Maurois' frequent re-use of his own work, the pages on Lytton Strachey in *Aspects de la biographie* (Paris: Grasset, 1928, pp. 100–102) re-appeared decades later in "Le biographe et ses personnages: vérité et poésie" (*Les Annales-Conferencia*, February 1967), p. 15.

50 Auriant's attack on Maurois was republished in book form in Nazi-occupied Paris (Paris: Éditions du Chêne, 1941), and on 13 February 1941 an article entitled "André Maurois plagiaire" appeared in the collaborationist weekly *La Gerbe*, to which writers in sympathy with National Socialism, such as Drieu la Rochelle and Céline, contributed (Gisèle Sapiro, *La Guerre des écrivains* [Paris: Fayard, 1999], p. 301). Drieu never tired of denouncing the impotence and lack of truly creative power of Jewish writers; his article "De Ludovic Halévy à André Maurois ou l'Impuissance du Juif en littérature," in the fascist weekly *Je suis partout* for 21 February 1941 sums up many more casual comments in his *Journal 1939–1945*. (Halévy, whose parents had converted to Christianity before his birth was an immensely productive, popular and successful writer in many genres in the second half of the nineteenth century.)

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0008

VI Mediator between France and Britain, France and the US

Abstract: *The very incarnation of the Entente Cordiale, moving in the highest circles of British society, Maurois was a valued political as well as cultural mediator between England and France and was the recipient of many British honours. Equally, after his first visit to the USA in 1927, he became an active mediator between the US and France. Convinced of the crucial importance for France of good relations with America, he worked hard to present through books, newspaper and magazine articles, and stints of lecturing at US colleges and universities, a more favourable image of America than was then current in France and a more favourable image of France than was common in America.*

Gossman, Lionel. *André Maurois (1885–1967): Fortunes and Misfortunes of a Moderate*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0009.

England, as is well known, occupies a privileged place in Maurois' work and, next to his beloved France, he had a deep affection for the country. "Amid the horrible wickedness of the species," the narrator of *Colonel Bramble* declares, "the English have established an oasis of courtesy and phlegm. I love them."[1] Maurois' England was not, to be sure, the working-class England of the industrial North, which he hardly knew. During their frequent sojourns in the British capital and in the South of England he and Simone not only mixed with prominent figures in the world of art and literature but were the guests, in the highest ranks of London society, of fashionable and influential hostesses, such as Lady Colefax and Mrs. Ronald Greville. As one of his most sympathetic contemporary readers noted, "M. Maurois knows absolutely nothing of the proletarian element in our societies. Indeed, this is the most significant gap in his understanding."[2] The England Maurois loved was the old-fashioned, comfortably hierarchical England dominated by the aristocracy and the well-to-do upper class. The lower classes are admitted to his work chiefly as caricatured servants, such as Tuttle in *The Chelsea Way*. An unfriendly critic might say that Maurois' image of England resembles the stereotype beloved by generations of conservative Anglophiles and kept alive by BBC series about country houses in Edwardian times. In an early book devoted to the Rouen of his childhood, Maurois did, in fact, observe that "in certain respects the native of Rouen is like an Englishman. [...] In Rouen there is a strong sense of hierarchy and a (very English) feeling of respect without servility."[3]

The English, for their part, recognized him as a loyal friend and honoured him for his many contributions to Anglo-French understanding. For his services in World War I, he was awarded the DCM (Distinguished Combat Medal) and in 1937 he was made a KBE (Knight Grand Commander of the British Empire). His appointment as Clark lecturer at Cambridge and Zaharoff lecturer at Oxford and the honorary degrees conferred on him by Edinburgh, St. Andrews and Oxford have already been mentioned. He and his wife Simone were frequently both guests and hosts, at fairly intimate dinner parties, of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor after the former Edward VIII and Wallis Simpson rented a house in Versailles and bought a property at Cap d'Antibes. At one of those small parties, a birthday party for Simone and the couples' friend, the prolific novelist, playwright and defender of traditional writing style Abel Hermant (later expelled from the Académie Française for having been an active collaborator during the German occupation), the former Edward VIII proposed the birthday toast to Simone.[4]

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0009

In 1937, Maurois was invited to attend the coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth in Westminster Abbey—"une attention des souverains eux-mêmes," he explains, "que j'ai bien connus quand ils étaient duc et duchesse d'York" ["a kind gesture of the sovereigns themselves, whom I knew well when they were Duke and Duchess of York"].[5] He and Simone had, in fact, been invited several times to dinner with the Duke and Duchess by Margaret Helen Anderson (Mrs. Ronald Greville), a celebrated, super-wealthy London socialite and close friend of Queen Mary, the Duke's mother.[6] The Duchess, Maurois noted, had had a French governess and liked to speak French. The Maurois found her enchanting: "We were completely conquered by that charming princess." He and Simone were especially taken by "the witty, yet kindly look in her eyes" and by the fact that "she had carefully read so many French books," including Maurois' own, which she judged, in their author's words, "with taste and subtlety." When she visited the Exposition Coloniale in Paris in 1931, she asked Lyautey, who as *commissaire général* was guiding her round it, to seat Maurois next to her at her table for tea. Subsequently, she invited him to speak on behalf of various charities in which she had an interest in London. Finally, in the dark days of the collapse of France, having been ordered to England by the GHQ of the French armed forces, Maurois received a request from her, now Queen Elizabeth, to write a speech that she could give in French over the radio to the women of France and to rehearse the delivery of it with her. " 'Mr. Maurois,' she said, 'I wish to tell you that I feel great sorrow for Paris . . . and great sympathy for the French in their misfortune . . . I love France *so much*. During out trip to Paris two years ago I felt the hearts of the women of France beating close to mine. I am going to try to talk to them this evening over the radio and to tell them the simple truths that come straight from my heart.' " To Maurois' modest suggestion that the Foreign Office might take offence at her consulting him, she apparently replied: "The Foreign Office would compose a Queen's speech for me," whereas "I want to speak as a woman, who at a time of misfortune talks to other women as friends."[7] And so it came about that on 14 June 1940 the Queen of England broadcast an address to the women of France that André Maurois had helped her to write.[8]

Given Maurois' deep affection for England, in its most traditional aspects, his enthusiasm for America—"Amica America," as he entitled the penultimate chapter of *I Remember, I Remember*, the first version of his memoirs—is all the more striking and indicates a certain evolution

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0009

of his ideas and values and a moderate, altogether characteristic adaptation to the modern world of the American century. His first contact with American culture was probably through Sylvia Beach and her celebrated Paris bookshop, Shakespeare and Company. Beach relates that when she opened the shop in 1919, "André Maurois was one of the first to bring me his good wishes. And he brought me a copy of his recently published little masterpiece *Les Silences du Colonel Bramble*." Later, in 1936, when the bookshop was in dire financial straits and in danger of closing, he got together with Gide, Du Bos, Duhamel, Mauriac, Valéry and others to raise money for it by setting up a society of "Friends of Shakespeare and Company," with an annual membership fee of 200 francs, payment of which entitled members to attend readings by famous authors. Along with Gide, Jean Paulhan, Valéry, Hemingway, Stephen Spender, and T.S. Eliot, who came over from London especially for the purpose, he himself was one of those who gave readings at the shop on the rue de l'Odéon.[9]

In 1927 Maurois visited America for the first time on a lecture tour and fell in love with the country. He was enthusiastic about everything, but especially about its "youth and confidence." "In the universities," he wrote, "the ardour, the desire to learn and the faith in the future of humanity rested me after so much European negativism. Most of all, I loved the atmosphere of good will and comradeship in which the social life moved."[10] He came back again in 1930, this time in response to an invitation from Dean Christian Gauss of Princeton to be a visiting professor in the fall semester in the University's Department of Modern Languages.[11] In the course of the year he also lectured at the New School, Cornell, Vassar, Wells, Hobart and William Smith, and City College, New York. On his return to France in 1931, convinced as he was of the necessity for France to maintain good relations with both England and the United States and of mutual understanding among the three nations, he wrote a number of articles intended to give the French public a more favourable (and, in his view, more accurate) picture of its former ally than it had come to have. Some of these essays were collected and published as a little book entitled *L'Amérique inattendue* (Paris: Editions Mornay, 1931). Two years later, in 1933, the publisher Gallimard having commissioned him to revisit the United States and report on the New Deal, he came out, in *Chantiers américains*, in support of Roosevelt's measures to alleviate the effects of the Depression. Based on direct observation and on interviews with US government officials and advisers, especially the younger men around the president, as well as businessmen and ordinary

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0009

citizens, the book sold extremely well in France (and might well, as already noted, strike today's reader as surprisingly topical).[12] Léon Blum, who had become prime minister of France in the government of the Front Populaire in 1936, told Maurois that he had found many stimulating ideas in this book, and Maurois himself claimed in his *Histoire de la France*, published a decade later, that it had been the hope of "the socialists and their leader, Léon Blum, a man of good faith, great culture, and courage, to bring about a legal and peaceable social revolution, analogous in its principles and its projects to the American New Deal."[13]

In 1939, Maurois made yet another trip to the United States. He travelled widely throughout the country—Boston, Cincinnati, Detroit, Columbus, Minneapolis, Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio, Tulsa, Atlanta and Washington DC, in addition to New York and Chicago—giving talks to social groups as well as to student and faculty audiences at universities and colleges large and small, public and private—among them Southern Methodist, the University of Iowa, Beloit, Agnes Scott and Princeton, to which he was always happy to return.[14] He also met with important figures in the political and cultural life of the nation, among them ex-president Herbert Hoover, Robert Hutchins, the influential president of the University of Chicago, and New York mayor Fiorello La Guardia, by whom he was very impressed and who he believed would make an excellent Republican presidential candidate. He was invited to lunch by Mrs. James Roosevelt, the mother of the president, and entertained at the White House, along with Jules Romains, by Eleanor Roosevelt. Maurois again wrote up and published the impressions he acquired of the United States in the course of this trip, as well as his thoughts—always respectful, serious, measured and to the present-day reader (2013) surprisingly relevant and on target—about the political situation, the outlook for Roosevelt in the upcoming elections, the possible Republican candidates, the effects (positive and negative, in his view) of the New Deal, American women, American coeds and—not least—American culture. In *États-Unis 1939, Journal d'un voyage en Amérique*, he was again eager, as in the essays and articles following his 1930 visit, to dispel popular French prejudices about the United States. He wrote about government support of the arts through the WPA, about the great museums, the superb orchestras, the Metropolitan Opera, the lively musical and theatrical scene in all parts of the country, the imaginative performances put on by students not only in private East Coast colleges and universities such as Princeton but in the public universities of the Midwest, and about the native literature

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0009

and drama: "no great classical art, an often disorderly style of composition, a popular and aggressively brutal use of language, but full of energy and originality in subject matter, images, and vocabulary—a powerful and unaffected poetic vision."[15] Of the Frick Collection in New York he declared that "it is impossible to imagine a more refined presentation. Not too many pictures, but every one a masterpiece, from the Fragonards to the three Vermeers, unsurpassed anywhere in the world; all this in a sober, beautifully furnished mansion, with fresh flowers everywhere, and concerts, lectures." "Ici tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté," he concluded, adapting a famous line from Baudelaire's poem "L'Invitation au voyage." Thornton Wilder, Walter Lippmann and Edmund Wilson come in for special mention as "exquisitely cultured Americans, raised in America, who would shine as brightly in London or Paris as in their own land"—and, Maurois takes care to add, there are a hundred others like them.[16]

Having travelled widely in all parts of the country, Maurois also questioned a view, shared by most of his contemporaries, of America as uniform, everywhere the same, lacking the lively variety that was said to be an essential aspect of European culture, and for that reason alone completely alien and even inimical. As usual, Maurois rejects such a stark dichotomy, insisting rather on multiplicity and points of contact:

> "America?" Professor Mathéras said. "America? Ah, it's a lot more complex than our writers—and even its own writers—think. Having criss-crossed the country from New York to New Mexico and from Louisiana to Arizona, having taught French in thirteen universities and three women's colleges, I say that there is no America … No…There are Americas. What is true of Boston becomes false if you are describing Kansas City, even more so if you are talking about Los Angeles…Babbitt? But Babbitt himself has evolved greatly, if only because he has read *Babbitt*…Babbitt is dead…from the moment he was born…You always seem to believe, you Europeans who have never set foot beyond the Place de la Concorde or Piccadilly, that Americans do not think or feel as we do…But they do, for God's sake, they do. An American experiences love, ambition, jealousy just as you do…He is different? To be sure…But the similarities are far more important than the differences."[17]

The polemical thrust of Maurois' writings about his experience of America needs to be emphasized. There were good grounds for his expanding his long-established role as intermediary and messenger of good will between the French and the British to include the Americans. The "old friend" who, in the opening pages of *L'Amérique inattendue*

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0009

had been charged with having spread "violent" ideas about the United States—that it is a soulless country where only mindless activity and making money matter, a "civilization of bathrooms, central heating, and refrigerators" and a dangerous threat to the culture of Europe[18]—was no figment of Maurois' imagination, but truly an old friend: namely, the novelist Georges Duhamel. Duhamel's *Scènes de la vie future* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1930), well translated into English as *America the Menace* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1931), contained every popular cliché about American culture and society—"the soulless assembly line of the industrial cities, the vulgarity and philistinism of what passed for American culture, the moral absurdities of Puritanism and prohibition, the fetid stockyards and machine-gun-toting gangsters of Chicago, the masters of deception and manipulation on Madison Avenue" in one scholar's summary—and it had become a bestseller in France.[19] Moreover it was one of a considerable number of similar contemporary works.[20] Maurois' eagerness to present an independent, nuanced and respectful view of the United States has to be seen in this context of rising French anti-Americanism. To Maurois, it was essential to sustain and foster a relationship he considered vital for the defence of France and of the values he believed she embodied. "Understanding England and the United States," he declared, "is at once an act of fairness, a pleasure, and a necessity for the French."[21]

In 1940, having turned down de Gaulle's invitation to join his planned Comité National Français, Maurois, as noted earlier, left England for the United States with the intention of presenting France's case to an often indifferent and even unsympathetic American public. Again, he gave many public lectures in the major cities—Baltimore, Washington, New York, Denver, Cincinnati, Fort Worth, New Orleans, San Francisco, Los Angeles—and at schools and colleges throughout the country. Some were on literary topics (at Princeton, for instance, he talked in 1941 on Gide and Mauriac) but mostly he used the platform to convince his audiences that it was military unpreparedness, not a failure of will that had brought about the fall of France and that the whole of Western civilization was imperilled as long as France remained under the heel of the invader. The title of a lecture announced in the *Harvard Crimson* for the evening of 2 December 1940 in the Lowell House Junior Common Room was typical: "The Fall of France: Its Causes and Implications for Europe and America." In his *Memoirs*, eager no doubt to dispel the rumours Bernstein and others had spread about him, Maurois recalls the warmth

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0009

with which audiences responded to his talks all around the country and quotes with pride from some of the letters he received from individuals who had attended them. At a dinner given one evening by the president of Columbia University, he relates, Mrs. Roosevelt, who was "essentially in favor of American intervention in Europe," spoke to him "of the positive effects of his lectures."[22]

In addition, from 1941 until 1943 Maurois regularly taught in the summer programme of the Maison Française at Mills College in California where he established friendly relations with two other French émigrés then teaching at Mills—Darius Milhaud, the composer, and Fernand Léger, the artist[23]—and in 1942 he agreed to lecture for a couple of weeks at the relatively new University of Kansas City (chartered in 1929, now part of the University of Kansas system). In 1943–1944 the Éditions de la Maison Française, a French language publishing house he had helped to set up in New York to maintain the presence of French culture while France itself was occupied and dismembered, brought out his *Histoire des États-Unis* in two volumes. An American version of this was published by Harper and Brothers in 1944 under the title *The Miracle of America*, thus complementing *The Miracle of England*, as the American edition of the *Histoire d'Angleterre* (Paris: Fayard 1937), published by Harper in 1937, had been entitled. Maurois was now decidedly an intermediary between France and the United States as well as between France and Britain.

Though no longer a young man, Maurois left New York in February 1943 to take part in the North Africa campaign, the daring invasion of Corsica, and the landings in Italy. Having fallen sick and been sent back to New York in December of the same year, he resumed his writing and teaching activities. Finally, however, in the summer of 1946, after returning to the University of Kansas City to spend the spring term as a visiting professor of literature, he bade farewell to the United States and returned definitively to France. Along with a glowing account of his experience as a teacher in Kansas, a sober but loving description of France as he found it barely a year after the end of the war, and assorted personal reflections on life and literature (at one point expressed in the form of a short story), his *Journal des États-Unis 1946* contains many pages on the society and culture of the United States: the problem of racial discrimination, labour unrest, the threat of atomic war. The tone of those parting thoughts about the United States, while not uncritical, is characteristically friendly and optimistic. Once again, Maurois seems to want to convey to his compatriots that the United States is by no means the cultural desert its

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0009

detractors have portrayed and that "it is not true any more to say that American civilization is a dollar civilization." He refers to many cultural institutions, from the classical music radio station WQXR to the great art collections, and he emphasizes that "education, with Americans, is a religion." He also makes effective use of anecdote, as when he describes how "the other day in New York, a cab driver, turning on his radio asked me, 'Recognize that?'" On Maurois' responding "No," the driver said "First movement of the Brahms Second."[24] Arguments about the low level of American culture are cleverly put in the mouths of Americans, with Maurois reserving for himself the role of countering them. No less important is the political lesson to be learned from America: "One of the great lessons of my life in America is that democracy can work, that it works in fact very well, and that there is no conflict between democracy and discipline."[25] Thanks to America, the conflict between the army lieutenant and the philosopher of the *Dialogues sur le commandement*—whether Maurois and his beloved Alain or "the two lobes of my brain"—has been resolved. In the preface to a 1949 re-edition of the *Dialogues* Maurois tells of having just reread the work he wrote in the early 1920s:

> In his deepest nature a writer changes little. Still, a man of sixty has had opportunities to observe much more than a man of thirty-five. The crashing fall of the countries under dictatorship in these last years and the double victory of the free countries have added fuel to the arguments of my philosopher, tons of fuel. I am now decidedly on Alain's side in this debate. [...] The crucial mistake of the lieutenant of the *Dialogues* is to have wished for the characteristics of a military leader in a civilian leader. The problems confronted by the two are different. [...] There can be no happiness without freedom. The enslavement of the mind, restrictions on freedom of thought and speech and on the freedom to judge those in government, these things are intolerable. Under a regime of censorship, the best minds withdraw from action and ease their anger in producing clandestine writings. Soon the leader is surrounded by fanatics and individuals seeking to ingratiate themselves with him. For fear of offending the master, people deceive him. [...] It is easy to speak ill of democratic regimes. Instability, disorder, corruption—these weaknesses are readily denounced by the enemies of democracy. But are the regimes we call "strong" better? Was there ever more corruption than under dictators? Where has there been less than in democratic England? [...] Democracies learn. Because they are free, they adjust to changing circumstances; they evolve; they improvise.[26]

Maurois returned to the United States on lecture tours—in February 1951, for instance, the Penn State *Daily Collegian* announced a lecture

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0009

by him on "1951, Time for Appraisal"—and in 1959, he again took on the role of mediator between France and her wartime defender. At a moment when, as he put it, "the relations between France and the United States were deteriorating" as a result of the war in Algeria and de Gaulle's assumption of power in France, he once more crossed the Atlantic. Having taken over the presidency of the *Société France-États-Unis* on the death of the poet and former ambassador to the US Paul Claudel, he doubtless felt it was his patriotic duty, albeit he was now seventy-four years old, to undertake, as in 1940, an extensive lecture tour of the United States, this time to explain "the new France" to the Americans.[27] He returned to New York one more time the following year, when in preparation for the *Histoire parallèle* of the USSR and the USA on which he was collaborating with the poet Aragon he interviewed twenty-one notable figures in all the main spheres of American life—Leonard Bernstein, James Conant, John Kenneth Galbraith, Robert Hutchins, Howard Mumford Jones and Roy Wilkins among them—and met with Dag Hammerskjoeld, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, at the latter's request.[28] The connection with the United States was never broken. In 1962, the president of the University of Maryland conferred an honorary degree on the seventy-seven-year-old writer at the University's army campus in Heidelberg, Germany. The citation read:

> During half a century of continuous creation, in a world rendered pitiless by the disorders of war and perilous by the discords of peace, André Maurois has always described peoples and nations in his stories, his novels, his courses, and his essays in a rational manner designed to reconcile them with one another. In particular he has revealed to the Anglo-Saxons the Spirit of France and to France and the entire world the Spirit of the Anglo-Saxons.[29]

In 1965, two years before his death, in a signal act of reconciliation that must have warmed his heart, Maurois was honoured by General de Gaulle, then president of France, with the Grande Croix of the Legion of Honour in recognition of his many services to his country. It was an honour he fully deserved. With all his love of England and then also of the United States, Maurois was always, above all else, a deeply patriotic Frenchman, whether in cultivating France's relations with the two "Anglo-Saxon" powers and promoting French culture or spontaneously exulting as he watched the French rugby team outclass and trounce the English team on TV in the Five-Nations Championship in 1962.[30]

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0009

Notes

1 *The Silence of Colonel Bramble* (New York: John Lane; London: The Bodley Head, 1920), p. 20.

2 Roya, *André Maurois*, pp. 105–106. Roya goes on to explain why this is so: "In the 1900's there were no children of proletarians in the French *collège*. From his military service,

> M. Maurois retained an impression of disillusionment. As for the War, in the course of which he might have rubbed up against the plebs, he spent it in the company of English officers." "I have little knowledge of the common people" ["J'ai peu connu le peuple"], Maurois himself acknowledged (quoted by his successor at the Académie Française, Marcel Arland, in his *Discours de Réception* [Paris: Gallimard, 1969], p. 15). Whereas Balzac "knew all classes of French society," Maurois told an interviewer, "my type of life made me know bourgeois society much better. I don't know the underworld and can't write about it" (quoted in obituary, *New York Times*, 10 October 1967).

3 *Rouen* (Paris: Gallimard, 1929), p. 47, cited in Roya, *André Maurois*, p. 26.

4 *I Remember, I Remember*, pp. 232–233. Maurois removed this quite charming account of his close connection with the Windsors when he revised and updated his memoirs in the 1960s.

5 *Choses nues*, pp. 141–142. The coronation, at which he was seated next to Paul Reynaud, the French Premier, is described in detail, *Choses nues*, pp. 143–146. See also *Memoirs 1885–1967*, pp. 257–259.

6 Though he refers twice in his Memoirs to Mrs. Greville (the illegitimately born daughter of the Scottish brewery magnate William McEwan), Maurois does not mention either her fascist sympathies or her anti-Semitism, evidently suspended in his case; see *The Crawford Papers: The Journal of David Lindsay, Twenty-Seventh Earl of Crawford and Tenth Earl of Balcarres, 1871–1940, during the Years 1892–1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 550, entry for 9 November 1933; and Harold Nicolson, *Diaries and Letters 1930–1939* (London: Collins, 1966), pp. 265, 396, entries for 12 June 1936 and 10 April 1939.

7 *Tragedy in France* (as in III, note 15), pp. 147–148. *Memoirs 1885–1967*, pp. 179, 257–258; *Choses nues*, pp. 141–142; Kolbert, *The Worlds of André Maurois* (as in I, note 8), p. 55; Suffel, *André Maurois* (as in I, note 15), p. 32; obituary of the Queen Mother, *Daily Telegraph*, 2 April 2002. Returning to London in 1956 for a Congress of PEN clubs, at which, following a dinner in the House of Commons, he was scheduled to give the closing address, he "saw once more," he relates, "that very gracious and sweet lady whom I had known as Queen of England in my days of misfortune, and who was now Queen Mother" (*Memoirs 1885–1967*, p. 380).

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0009

8 BBC file T16/186/4 TV Policy, Royal Family, File 4. My thanks to Jess Hogg of the BBC archives for verifying the broadcast and identifying the date.

9 Sylvia Beach, *Shakespeare and Company* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1956), pp. 22, 210.

10 *Memoirs 1885–1967*, p. 163. It was during this tour, under the auspices of the Fédération des Alliances Françaises, that Maurois gave two lectures at Yale, one of which, on "The Modern Biographers" (28 October 1927), was then published in the *Yale Review* (see III, note 8). The lecture is announced in the *Yale Daily News*, 28 October 1927, pp. 1–2.

11 Gauss had taught French and Italian literature at Princeton before becoming Dean. He appears to have resembled Maurois in his open-mindedness and aversion to dogma. According to his student Edmund Wilson, Gauss "never seemed to be trying to prove anything in any overwhelming way," but took his students on "a voyage of speculation that aimed rather to survey the world than to fix a convincing vision." See the essay by Wilson in his *Literary Essays and Reviews of the 1920s and 30s* (New York: The Library of America, 2007), pp. 11–29.

12 *Chantiers américains* (Paris: Gallimard, 1933); German trans. Peter Mendelssohn, *Amerika: Neubau oder Chaos* (Paris: Europäischer Merkur, 1933).

13 "Remarques d'André Maurois," following the chapter "Amica America" in Jacques Suffel, *André Maurois, avec des remarques par André Maurois*, pp. 129–130; Maurois, *Histoire de la France* (1947), in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 12, p. 469.

14 Maurois had lectured at Princeton in 1927. His success with the students and faculty on that occasion and again in 1930 was such that he was invited to accept the newly established Meredith Howland Pyne chair on a permanent basis—an offer, he relates in his *Memoirs*, that he turned down with the greatest difficulty, since he and his wife had found in Princeton "a full and tranquil happiness which neither Neuilly, the country, nor our hectic trips had ever been able to give us. [. . .] In that house in Broadmead we were alone together, bound to the world by no other tie than the work we had in common and that we both loved. Nothing spoiled these happy hours.[. . .] 'At last!' Simone said, 'I am having my wedding trip' " (*Memoirs 1885–1967*, pp. 174–175). "Mon coeur est resté sur les bords du lac Carnegie," Maurois wrote to Dean Gauss after he returned to France (Letter dated 18 June, from the Maurois' home in Neuilly [Princeton University Library, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Christian Gauss Papers, series 2, box 67, folder 13]).

15 *États-Unis 1939, Journal d'un voyage en Amérique* (Paris: Les Éditions de France, 1939), p. 158.

16 Ibid., pp. 47, 158.

17 The opening paragraph of a short story entitled "Jeune fille dans la neige," published in the short story collection *Le Dîner sous les marronniers*

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0009

(Paris: Éditions des Deux-Rives, 1951) and reprinted in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 15, pp. 344–351. The story may well have been written many years before, however. Its hero is named "Plugg" (the name, with the addition of a single consonant, attributed to one of the students in the Princeton preceptorial that is described in *L'Amérique inattendue* [*c.* 1931]) and the setting is Princeton University where Maurois was a visiting professor in the first term of the 1930–1931 academic year.

18 *L'Amérique inattendue*, p. 6. Cf. Georges Duhamel, *America the Menace* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1931), pp. 201–202: "I belong to a community of peasants who for centuries have lovingly cultivated fifty different varieties of plum, and who find in each a taste deliciously unlike that of any of the others. Well, no one in America concerns himself about such delicate riches. The beings who today people the American ant-hills [. . .] demand palpable, incontestable wealth, recommended, or, preferably, prescribed by the national divinities. They yearn desperately for phonographs, radios, illustrated magazines, 'movies,' elevators, electric refrigerators, and automobiles, automobiles, and, yet again, automobiles."

19 The copy in Princeton's Firestone Library, dated 1930, is from the 189th edition. The book was also translated into German as *Spiegel der Zukunft* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1931) and was reviewed in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* by the writer and critic Ernst Heilborn.

20 For example, Octave Homberg, *L'Impérialisme américain* (Plon, 1929), Jean Bonnefon-Craponne, *La Pénétration économique et financière des capitaux américains en Europe* (Labor, 1930), Isaac Kadmi-Cohen, *L'Abomination américaine* (Flammarion, 1930), Pierre Laurent, *L'Impérialisme économique américain* (Librairie du Recueil Sirey, 1931), Robert Aron and Arnaud Dandieu, *Le Cancer américain* (Rieder, 1931), Charles Pomaret, *L'Amérique et la conquête de l'Europe* (Armand Colin, 1931). On rising anti-Americanism in France in the late 1920s and 1930s, see David Strauss, *Menace in the West: The Rise of French Anti-Americanism in Modern Times* (Westport CT; Greenwood Press, 1978); William R. Keylor, "France and the Illusion of American Support," in *The French Defeat of 1940: Reassessments*, ed. Joel Blatt (Providence, R.I. and Oxford, Berghahn Books, 1998), pp. 204–244, on pp. 216–218; and especially Philippe Roger, *The American Enemy: A Story of French Anti-Americanism*, trans. Sharon Bowman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005; orig. French, Éditions du Seuil, 2002).

21 Review of two books by D.W. Brogan in *Pour la Victoire*, a French weekly published during World War II in New York (*Études américaines*, p. 220). On Maurois' efforts to combat French anti-Americanism, see Philippe Roger (as note 20 above), pp. 268–269, 373–375.

22 *Memoirs 1885–1967*, p. 290. Roger Martin du Gard tells of having heard from a cousin of his wife's, who was present when Maurois spoke in Baltimore, that

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0009

the lecture, "sad and courageous [. . .] deeply moved the audience" (Letter to Anne Heurgon-Desjardins of 25 July 1941, *Correspondance générale* [as in IV, note 36], vol. 8, p. 237). The writer Julien Green may have been present at the same lecture: "Got back to Baltimore on Tuesday and heard a lecture on France by Maurois. Poor lighting made him look like a corpse, but a corpse with tears running down his face. I wept myself as I listened to him explaining what caused the fall of his country" (Julien Green, *Journal*, vol. 3, 1940–1943 [Paris: Plon, 1946], 27 February 1941, pp. 70–71).

23 See Maurois' short, but incisive and superbly illustrated tribute to Léger, *Mon ami Léger* (Paris: Louis Carré, 1952).

24 *My American Journal* (London: Falcon Press, 1950 [orig. Paris: Éditions du Bateau Ivre, 1946; first English trans., *From my Journal*, New York: Harper & Brother, 1948]), p. 47. The story is repeated on p. 177. In general, this journal, conveying Maurois' thoughts, impressions, and readings in his last months in the U.S., on his return to France, and in the course of a lecture tour of Switzerland in late 1946, is a rambling, garrulous text. It is not Maurois at his best.

25 Ibid., p. 172. Nor, Maurois claims, need there be an irresolvable conflict between freedom and democracy. Reviewing a new edition of Tocqueville in the New York weekly *Pour la Victoire* in 1944–1945, he insists that liberalism can be adapted to democracy and that economic equality, which is inevitable ("economic democracy will come about" ["la démocratie économique sera"]), can be made compatible with individual liberty: "Let us try to adapt it, so that our freedoms will be preserved" ("Essayons, en l'aménageant, d'y sauvegarder les libertés") (*Études américaines*, pp. 28–29).

26 *Oeuvres complètes*, V, pp. 4–5.

27 *Memoirs 1885–1967*, pp. 395–396.

28 *Choses nues*, pp. 273–274. The interviews occupy the first part (pp. 15–180) of Aragon and Maurois, *Histoire parallèle* (Paris: Presses de la Cité, 1962), vol. IV.

29 Cited in *Memoirs 1885–1967*, p. 413.

30 *Choses nues*, pp. 276–277.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0009

VII Concluding Comment: The Limits of the Middle Ground

Abstract: *Maurois' very success in pursuing a middle way, his aversion to risk and "extremes,"—the basis of his appeal to a relatively privileged but threatened educated public in his own time—may be a cause of his failure to speak to those born later into an age that no longer sets great store by "civility."*

Gossman, Lionel. *André Maurois (1885–1967): Fortunes and Misfortunes of a Moderate*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0010.

Between the reputation Maurois enjoyed in his lifetime or the many honours he received and his significance for subsequent generations there is obviously no necessary connection. The reputation and the honours were won in large measure because of his ability to appeal to a fairly broad, educated public of moderate and thoughtful individuals like himself. In his politics, as in his literary style, he was conservative but not reactionary, critical and open-minded but not revolutionary, almost always engaging and at times modestly innovative but not sharply provocative or aggressive, patriotic but not chauvinist. He upset no apple-carts, either as a public figure or as a writer, except for the one time—after the fall of France—when his non-partisan, middle-of-the-road stance aroused hostility instead of deflecting it. His strategy was always rather to tame or domesticate what might otherwise be disturbing or disruptive, to integrate the unfamiliar into the realm of the known, and to render the obscure as intelligible and communicable as possible, while at the same time insisting that what counts as "knowledge" is constantly being revised in the light of new experiences and circumstances, that that is as it should be, and that the mutability of knowledge in no way justifies our disregarding it or disdaining to pursue it. It is still possible to read him with pleasure, as a "civilized" and eloquent voice from an earlier time, but at best his work offers—as it already did in his own day—an avoidance of intractable conflicts and disorienting uncertainties. A bruising confrontation with these is not to be found in Maurois' writing. His preference was for irony, tolerance and adaptation.[1] As friendly and unfriendly critics alike have pointed out, he remained attached, as a writer, to the French literary tradition, which he sought to adapt to modern times but not to alter radically or reject.[2] He has become a witness to a certain period in Western culture, rather than a writer who can still speak to us today, unless it be to remind us of the modest virtues and benefits of a liberal temperament that was probably always the property of a privileged and cultivated elite.[3] In the view of his successor at the Académie Française, Marcel Arland , full of admiration as Maurois was for Balzac and Proust, he knew that he had neither the creative energy of the former, his ability to bring to life an entire society, nor the latter's uncompromising dedication to his singular vision.[4] As Maurois himself acknowledged in an essay on Flaubert, "in the history of the arts it is not, generally, the most perfect works that stand out, but those that, because of their novelty, are the military milestones on the great highway of literature. The novels of Mérimée are ravishingly composed; they are far

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0010

from having the importance of *La Recherche du Temps perdu*, an extravagant, even in places monstrous, but stupendously original construction."[5] Maurois might well have been judging himself when he told the author of a book on the painter Jacques-Émile Blanche, whose work he knew well and who had painted a portrait of him, that Blanche "was an artist of rare intelligence, immense culture [...] and great elegance. [...] If [...] he was not a genius, he was extremely talented."[6]

Even in his own time, Maurois' practice and reputation as a major writer did not go completely unchallenged. A few outsiders on the extreme Left or Right of the political spectrum denounced him as a pillar of the "decadent" bourgeois political and cultural establishment they despised and wished to see destroyed. As early as 1929, Emmanuel Berl, a maverick critic, novelist, sometime socialist, and subsequently supporter of Vichy, had excoriated the "conformisme" of leading French writers of the day—Maurois' friends Mauriac, Duhamel, Martin du Gard and Maurois himself. "The peace that reigns between literature and power," Berl wrote, "is to be explained not so much by the mansuetude of the latter as by the conformism of the former. The truth is that our literature is more governmental than the government itself, more in harmony with the bourgeoisie even than the ministers who are in the service of the bourgeoisie. More bourgeois than the bourgeoisie. [...] There are moments when the bourgeoisie has doubts about itself, [...] about its values as a class. [...] Our writers have no doubts." As for Maurois, "Monsieur Maurois," he declared, "writes in the same way that Monsieur Poincaré governs—sensing the slightest risk and avoiding it."[7]

In the same vein Jean-Paul Sartre's friend, the novelist and critic Paul Nizan—who had been drawn, like Berl, both to the extreme Right and to the extreme Left before he finally joined the Communist party and became a vigorous opponent of fascism—denounced Maurois as a "kind of chef or couturier of ideas, [...] a man celebrated in the salons of society ladies, and whose entire art consists in ministering to the taste and vileness of the public. By winning the latter's approval he hopes to gain both royalties and social standing." "M. Maurois wants to be liked," he went on. "He presents himself as sensitive and refined. And everyone does like him. Except us." For his world is one in which "truths are tamed and domesticated like the throughbred dogs walked by society ladies, [...] the world of politeness." Maurois' intelligence—he is admittedly intelligent and cultivated—"stays on the periphery; it never seeks to grasp and absorb reality. It flees it and fears it. It skims the surface of the

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0010

world."[8] Nizan even accuses Maurois—along with other well-established writers, such as Jules Romains and Georges Duhamel—of drifting from bourgeois humanism towards fascism.[9] In contrast, Céline's *Voyage au bout de la nuit* wins praise, despite the author's failure to provide "the true explanation of the misery he denounces," as a major work "of a force and breadth which the well-coiffed dwarves of bourgeois literature haven't accustomed us to," a work that "rips off all the masks, all camouflages, [. . .] tears down the décor of illusions, [. . .] and increases our consciousness of man's current degradation."[10]

At the opposite end of the political spectrum, to the complex and tormented radical rightwinger Pierre Drieu la Rochelle, "life belongs to the impassioned and immoderate" ["la vie est aux passionnés, aux démesurés"]. For writers who seek to accommodate to the demands and expectations of the reading public Drieu had only contempt. Jewish writers, in particular, he held, are drawn to "the worst forms of conservatism when they can profit from them. They are drawn to the conventional in the theatre and everywhere (Halévy, Tristan Bernard, Porto-Riche, Blum). They never bring any powerful, creative element. There is not a single great Jewish writer in France (Maurois!)"[11] "Is Maurois any better than Bourget?" he asked rhetorically in 1939.[12]

By the late 1930s, Jean Paulhan, who barely two decades earlier had been charged with recruiting Maurois for Gallimard, wrote dismissively of his "conformisme assez plat"[13] and after the end of World War II —despite his own role in the Resistance—did his best to rehabilitate and publish writers, such as Céline ("un grand auteur") and Lucien Rebatet, whose adventurous literary experimentation had been overshadowed by their outspoken anti-Semitism and collaboration with the Germans during the Occupation. A few years later Paul Morand confided an unkind but perhaps not altogether distorted portrait of his recently deceased fellow-writer and friend to his private journal. Maurois' entire life, according to Morand, had been profoundly affected by his determination to conform, to adapt to the world as it is rather than fight it or subject it to radical criticism:

> I heard this morning on Swiss television (in an interview with Nordman) a lecture by Maurois on happiness and how to enjoy it. That unctuous, benedictory, ecclesiastical tone, all sugar and honey! When one thinks of what poor Maurois suffered: publicly cuckolded by his first wife, chained to his writing desk under the iron rule of the second, constantly gnawed at by the pain of being a German Jew, hungry for acceptance by the *establishment*, torn apart by his falling out, during the war, with an England that was his

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0010

> *raison d'être*, struggling to nobly resist ancestral fears and hatreds, seeking the company of Lords so as to raise himself, in his own eyes, above the status of a cloth merchant yet feeling less and less a Lord the more names he added to his Lords' address book.[14]

Maurois' French adaptation of Kipling's "If," which he included in his first major success, *Les Silences du Colonel Bramble* (1918), offers a less dismal and, there is reason to believe, no less authentic account of his relation to the world. It reflects not only the French writer's lifelong admiration for Kipling but the philosophy and view of life—a modest and conservative, yet resolute and activist scepticism and relativism—that he believed he shared with the British writer, surprising as that may seem to contemporary readers, for many of whom Kipling is now, in all probability a little read, out-of-date spokesman of a vanished Empire:

Si tu peux voir détruit l'ouvrage de ta vie
Et sans dire un seul mot te mettre à rebâtir,
Ou perdre en un seul coup le gain de cent parties
Sans un geste et sans un soupir;
Si tu peux être amant sans être fou d'amour,
Si tu peux être fort sans cesser d'être tendre,
Et, te sentant haï, sans haïr à ton tour,
Pourtant lutter et te défendre;

Si tu peux supporter d'entendre tes paroles
Travesties par des gueux pour exciter des sots,
Et d'entendre mentir sur toi leurs bouches folles
Sans mentir toi-même d'un mot;
Si tu peux rester digne en étant populaire,
Si tu peux rester peuple en conseillant les rois,
Et si tu peux aimer tous tes amis en frère,
Sans qu'aucun d'eux soit tout pour toi;

Si tu sais méditer, observer et connaître,
Sans jamais devenir sceptique ou destructeur,
Rêver, mais sans laisser ton rêve être ton maître,
Penser sans n'être qu'un penseur;
Si tu peux être dur sans jamais être en rage,
Si tu peux être brave et jamais imprudent,
Si tu sais être bon, si tu sais être sage,
Sans être moral ni pédant;

Si tu peux rencontrer Triomphe après Défaite
Et recevoir ces deux menteurs d'un même front,
Si tu peux conserver ton courage et ta tête
Quand tous les autres les perdront,
Alors les Rois, les Dieux, la Chance et la Victoire
Seront à tous jamais tes esclaves soumis,
Et, ce qui vaut mieux que les Rois et la Gloire
Tu seras un homme, mon fils.[15]

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0010

FIGURE 4 *Photograph of a charcoal drawing of André Maurois by Aaron Bilis (1929), inscribed to Sylvia Beach, "parce qu'elle aime les livres avec la même passion que moi."*

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0010

Notes

1 Cf. Maurois' recollection of the Pontigny "décades": "In those years, when clashes of party and nationalism tended to isolate hostile human groups, men of good will, coming from nations, sects and political parties that were opposed to each other, could gather together amicably at Pontigny" (*In Memoriam Paul Desjardins* [as in I, note 5], p. 57). Cf. likewise Maurois' emphasis on avoiding intractable conflict in a conversation with Robert de Saint-Jean soon after the publication of *Climats*: " 'You see the cruelty of life just as clearly as the *romanciers noirs*. Why, therefore, in *Climats*, the amiable tone of the whole?' 'Because after every hurtful blow,' he replied, 'I would feel my strength return, the blood would flow freely in my veins, I would be reconciled with the present and look smilingly on the future' " (Robert de Saint Jean, *Journal d'un journaliste* [as in V, note 46], pp. 34–35, entry for 30 December 1928).

2 Discussing Maurois' "aimable plaquette" ["pleasant little book"] on *Conversation* (1927), the novelist, essayist, and critic Pierre-Henri Simon observed that it "illustrated the permanence of a genre and a taste: in this case the genre of the maxim and the taste for a mode of observing character and manners oriented toward life in society. The connection with the classical tradition is so strong here," Simon went on, that there is almost no divergence from the style of the masters—La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère, Rivarol, Joubert—each of whom admittedly has placed his own particular stamp on that style, more piquant in one case, more biting or insightful in another, but all of them sharing the same "concentration of design, clarity of syntax, pointedly sharp antitheses, and maliciousness free of anger, along with the ease and grace of good form." In this genre, Simon suggests, no one "could do better than M. André Maurois in those seventy-five shavings of impeccable prose" (*Diagnostic des lettres françaises contemporaines* [Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1966], p. 95). In similar vein, Jean Maurice Nivat: "Age has not changed his modest and conciliatory way of looking at things. In the midst of the audacities and excesses of our age, he will have contributed greatly to sustain a literature that is clear and traditional, yet unmarked by academicism, an open and illusionless conservatism" (*Littérature de notre temps* [as in V, note 4], p. 146).

3 I cannot resist quoting in this connection an informal written comment from my colleague Professor Suzanne Nash after I asked her to read over the ms. of this article:

> His becoming outdated may be the inevitable result of the changes that took place from the '60's on, with the emphasis on theory. [. . .] He believed in the "mutability of knowledge," not its systematization. He was another kind of intellectual, in tune with his time and thinkers like Valéry and others on both sides of the political spectrum. He must have known this. His Memoirs in the '60's are a "looking back." His late work on the

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0010

"new novelists" is interesting in this light. We'll never have another era like that of the '20's and '30's when being a "man of letters" was not something to apologize for. He didn't write for academics or specialists.

A related way of envisaging the cultural shift that has contributed to Maurois' loss of prestige and popularity is offered by Robert Muchembled in his *La Société policée. Politique et politesse en France du XVI^e^ au XX^e^ siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 1998). According to Muchembled, 1968 marked the end of the "golden age of a broadly shared politeness," that is, of a culture based on the avoidance of "excess, vulgarity, and violence" (p. 262), a "savoir-vivre en République," which, rooted in the upper classes but widely disseminated in all classes, served to define France as a nation and to hold it together by mitigating social conflict. What Muchembled describes as the new "Temps des incivilités" clearly leaves little room for a writer who himself admitted to excessive "politeness." A recent study of a friend of Maurois', the once immensely successful, well-regarded portrait painter Jacques-Émile Blanche, presents Blanche in a similar light as a refined product and recorder of a vanished world, the end of which led to his work's being relegated to museum storerooms and ceasing to be seen as relevant to art or even to art history (Jérôme Neutres, ed., *Du Côté de chez Jacques-Émile Blanche: Un salon à la belle époque* [Paris: Skira/Flammarion, 2012], pp. 14–20).

4 Arland, *Discours de réception*, pp. 19–20. Within a few years of his death the literary marketplace provided incontrovertible evidence of Maurois' having slipped down "the greasy pole." Paul Morand tells in his memoirs of having been offered 5,000 Francs for his inscribed copy of Joyce's *Ulysses*, even though it had suffered water damage from firefighters during the raids on London in 1940. When he tried to sell the agent "stacks of inscribed works by Maurois," he was told: "These have no value. You'd better wait"—to which Morand replied, "They'll be worth even less if I wait" (Paul Morand, *Journal inutile*, vol. 1 [1968–1972], p. 499 [29 March 1971]). Given the anti-Semitic tenor of his private journal, Morand, who had pledged allegiance to Vichy and had served as the regime's ambassador to Switzerland and Romania, no doubt found satisfaction in the fate that had befallen a fellow-writer with whom he had once had a friendly relationship, but in favour of whom he had been passed over for membership of the Académie Française before the war, whom he accused of having opposed his own election to that body in 1958, and whom he regularly presents, in contrast to his pre-war published comments on him, as a mediocre artist, motivated by Jewish ambition and resentment. But even a well-disposed fellow-academician—the rightwing writer Michel Déon—acknowledged regretfully in a lecture at the Académie Française in December, 2003 that Maurois, "that great writer, [. . .] whom the most senior among us remember as the most courteous of men" had been "detained for too long

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0010

in purgatory" (http://www.academie-francaise.fr/lecture-du-palmares-seance-publique-annuelle).

5 "Gustave Flaubert," in *Lecture mon doux plaisir* (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1957), p. 220.

6 "C'était un artiste d'une rare intelligence, d'une immense culture [. . .] et d'une grande élégance. [. . .] S'il lui manqua le génie, il eut beaucoup de talent" (interview with Georges-Paul Collet, in Collet, *Jacques-Emile Blanche. Biographie* [Paris: Bartillat, 2006], pp. 237–238).

7 "M. Maurois écrit comme M. Poincaré gouverne, avec le souci et le sens du moindre risque" (Emmanuel Berl, *Mort de la pensée bourgeoise* [as in V, note 37], pp. 55–56, 86). Born into the upper ranks of the French Jewish bourgeoisie, Berl was later dubbed "le nègre juif du Maréchal Pétain" ["Marshal Pétain's Jew nigger"]. (See *L'Express*, 1 March 2007). He was the ghost-writer of one of Pétain's most famous speeches to the French people after the fall of France.

8 Review of Maurois, *Sentiments et Coutumes*, in *Le Monde*, 1 March 1935, p. 10, reprinted in Paul Nizan, *Articles littéraires et politiques*, ed. Anne Mathieu (Paris: Joseph K, 2005), pp. 296–299. See also the review of Maurois, *Mes songes que voici*, in the Communist party newspaper *L'Humanité*, 10 March 1933, reprinted in Paul Nizan, *Articles littéraires et politiques*, pp. 206–207.

9 Letter to the "Association des écrivains et artistes révolutionnaires" in *La Littérature internationale* (a journal founded in 1933 under the auspices of Romain Rolland, Upton Sinclair and John Dos Passos, of which Nizan was an editor), 3 (May–June 1934), pp. 119–124, reprinted in Nizan, *Articles littéraires et politiques*, pp. 296–297.

10 Review of Céline, *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, in *L'Humanité*, 9 December 1932 (text translated by Mitchell Abidor [www.marxists.org/archive/Nizan/1932/celine-review.htm]).

11 Pierre Drieu la Rochelle, *Journal 1939–1945*, ed. Julien Hervier (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 16 September 1939, p. 80; 2 February 1940, p. 146. See also V, note 50.

12 Pierre Drieu la Rochelle, *Sur les Écrivains*, ed. Frédéric Grover (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), p. 77.

13 "a platitudinous conformism" in a letter dated 1 July 1935, cited in Sapiro, *La Guerre des Écrivains* (as in V, note 50). See also Cerisier, *Une histoire de La NRF* (as in I, note 7), pp. 382, 465.

14 Morand, *Journal inutile*, vol. 1, 12 August 1972, p. 759. In fairness, Morand's judgment of Maurois had always been that, despite his reputation as the author of *L'Instinct du Bonheur*, he had never been an epicurean freely delighting in life's pleasures. A portrait of Maurois that he published before World War II is not in contradiction with the 1972 diary entry, except that the tone was then friendly and admiring. Maurois, Morand wrote in 1938, was a "stoic unrecognized as such, because he never presented himself as

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0010

a stoic. [. . .] The happiness he suggests that we should aim to achieve 'by accepting life as it is' [. . .] has an almost Franciscan aura of modesty and gentleness (Paul Morand, "André Maurois," in *L'heure qu'il est* [1938]; reprint in Paul Morand, *Chroniques 1931–1954* [Paris: Grasset, 2001], p. 264).

15 *Les Silences du Colonel Bramble*, in *Oeuvres Complètes*, vol. 1 (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1950), pp. 52–53. Dominique Bona points out that Maurois made his translation of Kipling's "If" in 1916, when he was serving at the front, and sent it to his then wife Janine Szymkiewicz, whose (in his view) risqué behaviour and association with unsavoury characters had upset him, in the hope that it might be a positive influence on her (*Il n'y a qu'un amour* [as in V, note 44], p. 136). Maurois' translation is a good deal more free than the later translation by Antoinette Soulas in Kipling, *Poèmes* (Paris: Denoël et Steele, 1935).

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0010

Index

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0011

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0011

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0011

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0011

DOI: 10.1057/9781137402707.0011