The Women Characters in Maurice Baring's Novels

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THE WOMEN CHARACTERS IN MAURICE BARING'S NOVELS

BY

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INTRODUCTION

In this country Maurice Baring is doubtless the least known of the Chesterton-Belloc-Baring trio. Possibly this is because his works are less controversial than those of his associates. The dearth of American readers is compensated, however, by a host of admiring and appreciative readers throughout Europe. In France such discriminating critics as Gustav Charbonne, Charles du Bos, and André Maurois have praised his work highly, particularly his novels. Since Baring's work has not yet passed the test of time, an adequate evaluation of the novels would be difficult. A more feasible task is the one undertaken here, that of analyzing the women in the major novels.

The purpose of the present study is to analyze the role of woman in Maurice Baring's novels. In all but two of the novels considered in this study, a woman is the principal character. She is the protagonist; around her all the action revolves. Even in those other novels in which a man takes the lead, namely C. and The Coat Without Seam, a woman is largely responsible for the hero's destiny. The importance of woman, then, is unquestionable. At the core of Baring's feminine portrayals is a spiritual struggle, a struggle between duty and desire. In examining this struggle, an attempt will be made to show how the Catholic doctrine of expiatory suffering resolves that breach between duty and desire. The manner in which Baring does this, brings about these spiritual conflicts in the lives of these women characters, will form a large part of this
investigation.

A further reason for research into this problem is Baring's profound insight into the operation of divine grace in weak human beings. We admit the difficulty of evaluating the place of grace and the factor of grace in human actions, but in Baring's characters no other implication is reasonably acceptable. That this is Baring's own intent will be shown in the first chapter. Man's relations to God and his neighbor form the theme of the novels, yet they are in no way apologetic in the ordinary sense of that term. Baring never tries to proselytize or to indoctrinate in his presentation of human life. He presents life in action, but life being lived with all its religious implications. It will be evident in the course of the thesis, and is also significant in this connection, that there is never any presentment of a religious viewpoint. Selected because of the part woman plays in them, the following novels form the basis of this thesis: G., Cat's Cradle, The Coat Without Seam, Daphne Adeane, Darby and Joan, and The Lonely Lady of Dulwich. The plots of the novels will be utilized only insofar as they contribute to an understanding of the women characters.

In chapter one Baring's technique of characterization and his philosophy of life are discussed. Chapter two deals with the major women from Baring's novels, their conflicts and adjustments. The third chapter handles woman's influence and importance in general, with specific reference to the minor women. In chapter four, Baring's skill in describing feminine personality characteristics and external beauty is treated.
An exceptionally helpful related study was Father J. Barry Dwyer's *Catholic Optimism in the Novels of Maurice Baring*. Indebtedness to Father Dwyer is increased by the fact that he was able to include in his work actual correspondence with Mr. Baring himself.

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CHAPTER I

BARING'S TECHNIQUE OF CHARACTERIZATION

AND PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

Before proceeding to woman's role and the treatment of her problems, it will be necessary to make some preliminary remarks concerning Maurice Baring's characterization in general. To say it is exceptional is an understatement. Several authorities give special emphasis to this element in Baring's novels. The word "delicacy" somewhat conveys the subtlety of Baring's women portrayals, but not completely. To it, Joseph J. Reilly adds the quality of "extraordinary insight."\(^1\) For Father Hugh Kelly, S.J., "reticence" is the best word.\(^2\) He sees Baring's work akin to that of Henry James. So also does Mr. Reilly, who says, "As with Henry James's women the intonation of a voice, a moment's silence, a look meaningless to all the world else, tells everything."\(^3\) However much Baring's use of reverie and self-examination may resemble that of impressionistic writers, it is distinct from their work. For Baring such devices are merely means to a worthy end, the illumination of life; whereas the impressionists made technique so important that it became almost an end in itself.

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\(^1\)Joseph John Reilly, "Novels of Maurice Baring," \textit{The Catholic World}, 150:188, November, 1939.


\(^3\)J. Reilly, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 190.
Baring is extremely objective in characterization only because he con-
siders objectivity the best means of revealing his characters. By his
personal withdrawal, the author permits his reader to see within the
person, without being expressly told. Though it is difficult to tell in
what manner he achieves this unique effect, Gerald Gould gives a concise
synthesis of it when he says:

Mr. Baring has developed a technique of his
own: in various novels he has put an appar-
ently plain unvarnished tale in the mouth of
this character or that -- or of several
characters -- and out of what they betray
by what they don't say, as much as out of
what they do say, has indicated his events.4

For the sake of clarity, one example of this technique can be cited.
In Cat's Cradle Guido, husband of Blanche, was insanely jealous of the
attentions his wife received from other men. In unadulterated spite, he
left fragments of a letter addressed to Blanche by one of her admirers
in the fireplace where he knew Blanche would see it. No actual quarrel
occurred between husband and wife, but that one action caused a breach
in their relationship. Blanche's former respect turned to a cold hatred.5
That such a drastic change in relationship between husband and wife could
be recorded by mere objective narration is almost unbelievable. Indeed,
such skill is rarely found unless it be in the works of the Russian
writers, Tolstoy, Dostoievsky, and Gogol, to whose style Baring's is
often compared. Baring himself, in one of his studies of Russian

4Gerald Gould, "C.," Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science,
and Art, 137:6;42, June, 1924.
5Maurice Baring, Cat's Cradle (New York: Doubleday, Doran and
literature, says that Dostoievsky's characterization resembles the Greek chorus, so detached is it.

Dostoievsky never nudges our elbow, never points out to us things which we know already, but he illuminates with a strong searchlight the deeps of the sombre and tortuous souls of his characters, by showing us what they are themselves thinking, but not what he thinks of them.6

This is precisely what Baring achieves. In reading his novels one is constantly aware of the mental processes of his characters, of their viewpoints, feelings, and emotions, yet Baring himself remains aloof. Father Kelly expresses this when he says:

There is a strange air of objectivity about his novels. The author never obtrudes himself; he does not approve or condemn. Je ne propose pas: J'expose — he might have said with Taine. His characters move and act by the dynamism of their own natures. His medium is quite transparent and unobtrusive. His style is quite without emphasis or effort or rhetoric ... You are looking on at a group of people acting and reacting on each other chiefly by the force of their characters and temperaments and not primarily by the accident of fact or incident.7

Baring's detachment from his characters does not result in a cold disinterestedness. His detachment is accompanied by a deep compassion, as Marion Lochhead points out, a compassion having its roots in a true concept of the nature of man and of man's limitations. "He is neither ruthless nor sentimental; both are inartistic, and both are unchristian,

6Maurice Baring, Landmarks in Russian Literature (London: Mathuen and Company, 1910), p. 215. /Italics not in the original./

while Maurice Baring was a true artist whose art was completely Christian. 8 Monsignor Ronald Knox, who knew Baring personally, remarks on his unselfishness, an absolute requisite for compassion. "That is, I suppose, why his characters, and especially his women characters, have so much of reality, of spontaneity. He was accustomed, from his daily habits, to think through other peoples' minds, instead of trying to impose his thought on others."9

Several critics condemn Baring because he fails to describe deep, compelling emotions. Ethel Smyth tries to discover the reason for Baring's reserve. One incident, she thinks, throws some light in this regard. Since Baring had written such refreshing memoirs of his father, Miss Smyth asked him why he had never written any of his charming mother. His reply followed a pause, "Because I couldn't." She thinks this "because I couldn't" applies likewise to Baring's reticence in writing scenes of strong passion.10 This poise is the quality to which one authority credits Baring's success. "There is much the same pleasure in reading him as in catching a level, modulated voice amid a gathering of strident, high-pitched talkers, each striving to out-speak the others."11 Possibly this same poise accounts for Baring's lack of appeal for the general reading public.


The dry sober style, so lacking in emphasis, the uniform understatement, the absence of the brilliant phrase or the purple passage, the studious objectivity — these and other larger properties of composition gave a first impression of something bleak, of a want of colour and personality.\textsuperscript{12}

And if it is humorous to note that one critic accuses superficial readers of not even recognizing that Maurice Baring possesses a true literary style,\textsuperscript{13} it is, nonetheless, a sad indictment. For the artistically discerning reader, however, Baring's characterization is a happy relief from that of the naturalistic school.

If, as David Daiches says, "The completeness of a character is judged by the degree to which its potentialities are realized,"\textsuperscript{14} then Baring's characters are complete, for throughout a novel, every nuance in the lives of the characters leads to a fuller realization of their potentialities. As the story progresses, the characters reveal themselves, never developing by a sudden illogical transformation, but always by a delicate unfolding. Because in real life people have their inconsistencies, so, in Baring's novels, there is no simple and consistent character. Like a true realist, Baring presents each of his characters, and especially is this true of the women, as a complex personality, capable, yet somehow incapable, of solution.

\textsuperscript{12}H. Kelly, op. cit., p. 15.


In order to understand better the women characters, an exposition of Baring's philosophy is necessary. A novelist must be concerned with universals if his works are to endure. Universals are those eternal, immutable truths concerning man's origin, nature, and destiny. Regarding these, Baring held the Scholastic concept of the nature of man: man is a substantial union of body and soul created by God to His own image and likeness. Through supernatural faith, Baring is conscious of God's elevation of man to a supernatural life and destiny. The failure of many modern novelists may be traced to their loss of such a concept of man in the abstract. One of the few American novelists who did not fall into this error is Willa Cather. For that reason Miss N. Elizabeth Monroe sees her as giving the direction to the novel of the future.15 Like Willa Cather, Baring brings out the influence of heredity and environment on his characters, but never permits them to become determining factors. His men and women are able to overcome inherited traits and to rise above their environment by reason of grace and free will; however, critics who do not grasp Baring's subtle style have accused him of the heresy of fatalism.16 Father J. Barry Dwyer repudiated such accusations. He analyzes Baring's novels from the standpoint of Catholic optimism, the antithesis of fatalism. In his very scholarly study he shows that Baring's entire concern was to demonstrate the necessity of man's resignation to,


and acceptance of God's will. By "Catholic Optimism" he means the triumph of grace over nature. Since no paraphrase is really adequate where Baring's own evaluation of his work is concerned, the following long quotations are included. They begin with Father Dwyer's presentation of the problem of fatalism in a letter to Mr. Baring, dated February 22, 1935.

In reading your novels one is struck by the apparent inability of the characters to better themselves in the midst of distressing circumstances. Men and women seem to be caught or trapped in a pattern of life, of their own volitional weaving it is true, but nevertheless, inextricably trapped. They see their predicament, the way out is shown them—a way very often apparently simple—and yet they are impotent to take even the first step which might lead to their freedom. They do not seem to be able to help themselves. On the surface of things one is tempted to put down their creator as a fatalist or mechanist, as Father Martindale, S. J. suggests in the August 14, 1929 issue of the Commonweal.

To me it seems rather that you mean to portray the dominant selfishness which actually characterizes most men and women, a dominant selfishness that bars them from taking the only way out of their difficulties, the way of self-sacrifice. They continue in mere velleity (they would like to improve) and in the drift of their own inclinations until some incident occurs, sometimes catastrophic, which clears their spiritual sight and strengthens their wills to act.

In a marginal note along side the preceding paragraph, Mr. Baring wrote, "Yes, exactly," and in his letter answering Father Dwyer, dated


18 Ibid., p. 20.
March 16, 1935, he gives an explanation:

... You interpret what I have tried to say. I have never meant to subscribe to any fatalistic doctrine. ... I think the moral I try to show up is, "In la sua volontà è nostra pace." But it is difficult to gauge the effect of what one writes and one too often gives a different impression from what one intends.¹⁹

The very impression Baring said he intended in his own novels, he notes in the works of the Russian, Nikolai Gogol:

... there is no shadow of the powers of darkness, no breath of the icy terror which blows through the works of Tolstoy; there is no hint of the emptiness and the void, or of the fear of them. There is nothing akin to despair. For his whole outlook on life is based on faith in Providence, and the whole of his morality consists in Christian charity, and in submission to the Divine.²⁰

That others recognized that Baring's works reveal the action of supernatural grace in the soul is shown by a conversation recorded by Mr. Robert Speaight, when the latter had lunch with Mr. François Mauriac in Paris, June, 1945. "You are the first Englishman I have met," Mr. Mauriac remarked, "who rates the novels of Baring at their proper worth. What I most admire about them is the sense he gives you of the penetration of grace without making you aware of it."²¹ Laura Lovat²² tells us that when Baring heard this, his humility prevented him from thinking Mr. Mauriac meant grace in the theological sense. But when

¹⁹Loc. cit.

²⁰Maurice Baring, Landmarks in Russian Literature, pp. 74-75.


²²Lovat, op. cit., p. 5.
he was assured that the word was used precisely in that sense, he was too moved to speak.

As a lover of Truth, as one who subtly but deliberately made Catholic philosophy the basis of his novels, Baring is ranked beside Bernanos and Mauriac. Calvert Alexander dares to place Mr. Baring first among Catholic novelists. An apparently contradictory view is that maintained by Francis B. Thornton who says that, except for several scattered passages, one finds no dynamic Catholicism in Baring's novels. At first the writer of this study agreed with Father Thornton, for Baring's Catholics are frequently no better than some bad non-Catholics. But after further research and closer familiarity with Mr. Baring's works, her opinion has changed. Maurice Baring knew that every Christian should be an integrated character, his lower nature submissive to the higher. Being a writer who faces reality, however, few of his men and women were so integrated. He sympathized with the weaknesses of human nature, but he never condoned them. On one occasion when Father Martindale questioned Baring on his partiality for unstable characters, he met the reply, "People are like that." In a letter to Baring, George Bernard Shaw, too, remarked, "The real difficulty ... is


that you draw society as it really is and not as our good public conceives it.\textsuperscript{27} No "white-headed" boys existed for Baring. For him the consequences of original sin were a reality.

There was no drifting or mere passivity in Baring the Catholic; he accepted the Faith with its full demands and implications. But his unslackening grasp of truth and Catholic principles did not weaken his interest in the spectacle of life or blunt his sympathy for human weakness. Rather is it the truth that his Faith gave strength and fineness to his artistic powers.\textsuperscript{28}

We admit, then, that his men and women are not saints. Saints do not make a novel Catholic. To see evil presented as evil, to watch a character grow to a deeper appreciation of the faith or fall to the depths of dark despair, to know that grace is working in what, to purely human eyes, seems an absolutely hopeless situation, these are privileges afforded by the novel that is truly Catholic, and all this Baring does. Earlier in this chapter Baring's reticence in describing deep emotions was mentioned. Monsignor Ronald Knox attributes his not being a "sabre-rattling convert\textsuperscript{29}" to that same reserve; yet, though he did not ring the gong to announce, "I am a Catholic," or, "This is a Catholic novel," it will be apparent to the more than casual reader that Baring's novels are a direct result of his Christian philosophy of life, and his women characters are not less so.

\textsuperscript{27}G. B. Shaw cited by Hugh Kelly, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{28}Kelly, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 24.
\textsuperscript{29}Knox, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 298.
CHAPTER II
THE MAJOR WOMEN IN THE NOVELS:
THEIR STRUGGLES AND
THE OUTCOME

It is in the very nature of woman to give herself to others, contemporary attitudes of women before the public notwithstanding. If she cannot do this successfully or if her offer of herself is rejected, she searches for some outlet, a release for her desire for sacrifice. "When the chance to make this sacrifice does not come, she may be deceived into thinking herself in love; she may try casual affairs, or she may marry and then repent."¹ That is what many of Baring's women characters did throughout their lives and would have continued doing had they not cooperated with the promptings of divine grace. Father Dwyer² and Father Hugh Kelly³ see Mr. Baring's characters as exemplifying St. Augustine's prayer, "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee."

The famous sentence is also the key to the full understanding of the attitude of Maurice Baring to life. He has exposed unerringly the disease and sufferings of his characters; no less unerringly though less obtrusively he indicates the cause and the remedy.⁴

¹ N. E. Monroe, op. cit., p. 61.
² J. B. Dwyer, S. J., op. cit., p. 94.
⁴ loc. cit.
The remedy in the case of each feminine character comes from a realization of human weakness and of divine mercy. It seems apparent that Baring wishes to indicate that every change of heart was inspired by supernatural grace. Baring is too subtle an artist, however, to state such a cause directly. Even though at times his women seem bent on their own moral destruction, they will eventually triumph. Throughout, the delicate impression is given that

Christ minds; Christ's interest, what to avow or amend
There, eyes them, heart wants, care haunts, foot
follows kind,
Their ransom, their rescue, and first, fast, last
friend.5

This theme will be evident as we now examine six women characters from four of Baring's major novels.

Cat's Cradle: Blanche Roccapalumba

In Cat's Cradle is found the most poignant baring of a woman's soul. The woman in this case is Princess Blanche Roccapalumba. Seldom does a reader come to know a character as well as Blanche, so skillfully does Baring depict her.6 Blanche Clifford, out of deference to her father, contracted a marriage de raison with Prince Guido Roccapalumba. This was the first mis-step in her life. Guido's mother governed all Blanche's affairs, and soon Blanche suspected, not without grounds,


6One writer akin to Baring in this regard is Sigrid Undset, who gives us the same, thorough, intimate knowledge of the characters.
that even her husband had joined the spy league. This led to a breach in their relationship.\textsuperscript{7} Several admirers entered Blanche's life, none of whom she really loved. Not from any real love did she agree to elope with Chiaramonte, but rather from a longing for escape. On the night appointed for the elopement, Guido suffered a strange paralysis, and Blanche, stricken in conscience, hastened to his bedside. There she stayed for fourteen years, a patient, admirable, but actually lifeless Blanche, lifeless, because she refused to face reality. She would not have agreed with these words of another character in the book: "... man confined in those dungeons of sorrow, misery\textsuperscript{8} is forced to make his own rope-ladder, to climb the spiked walls, and with scarred hands and bleeding feet to reach lasting freedoms." Unfortunately, Blanche failed to make her own rope-ladder, because she refused to accept her lot in life. She hungered for love, and had she sought it where only true happiness can be found, there would be no complexity in analyzing the Princess. But it was not so simple. When faced with the great amour of her life, she succumbed, even though her lover, Bernard Lacy, was many years her junior. Bernard sensed Blanche's loneliness, her desire for affection. This may be seen from his sympathetic attitude toward her.

It was something suffering and human and appealing, something in distress, that wanted pity, comfort,

\textsuperscript{7}Ibid., pp. 71, 92.

\textsuperscript{8}Ibid., p. 257.
and solace and understanding, and love — above all things, love.\textsuperscript{9}

Discovered with Bernard by Guido, who was suddenly able to walk, Blanche left her husband's home, broke all relationship with Bernard, and awaited the divorce which she knew to be inevitable. For a time the care of her invalid uncle, Charles Clifford, saved Blanche from herself. At his death she indulged in self pity.

Her real life was over — all over; her youth had gone; she was middle-aged; she felt that she had never really lived, only, that is to say, during those few fatal months in Rome when she had known Bernard. All her friends had either left her or were dead; and now this her last friend, her uncle, was leaving her. She seemed to bring misery and unhappiness to people.\textsuperscript{10}

In addition to this sadness, came news of Guido's death. Sincerely penitent, Blanche begged God to forgive her for her cruelty to her husband. At this stage her conscience was not impervious to wrongdoing. Her self-accusations could have aided her in uprooting pride had she allowed herself to arrive at true self-knowledge. Short-lived was this period of repentance, however. By a strange coincidence, her life once more crossed with Bernard's. His best friend, Walter Troumestre, had introduced him to Rose Mary Clifford, Blanche's cousin and ward. Gradually Bernard became very intimate with Rose Mary. Although Blanche met Bernard occasionally, she had, for a time, no

\textsuperscript{9}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 290.

\textsuperscript{10}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 372.
idea how his relationship with Rose Mary was deepening. Finally, faced with the realization that Bernard did love her cousin, she dismissed the thought from her mind, for, she told herself, she had first claim on Bernard. When Bernard asked Blanche for Rose Mary's hand in marriage, she was shocked.

Could she, Blanche, give Bernard up? Could she hand him over to Rose Mary without a struggle? "I suppose I ought to," she said to herself, "and I must decide now, this minute, this second... O God!" She deliberately misinterpreted it as a proposal to herself.

. . . She looked at Bernard with infinite love, and infinite tenderness, and she said with an accent and a look and a turn of her head that she knew he couldn't resist: "I see no reason why we shouldn't be married if you really mean it. . . ." Bernard let her "think" he meant the proposal for her. They were married.

Mr. Las Vergnas claims Blanche was convinced it was she Bernard meant when proposing. The above excerpt from the novel disqualifies such an opinion. Father Martindale, the translator of Mr. Las Vergnas' book, disagrees with him by saying that Blanche perfectly realized the situation.

11Ibid., pp. 445-446.
12Loc. cit.
14C. C. Martindale, Appendix to Ibid., p. 147.
After such a gross deception, Blanche's character began to deteriorate. The hideousness of her deceit only made her more conscious of Rose Mary, the impenetrable barrier between Bernard and herself. Hateful as jealousy is, its victim must be pitied. Now Blanche became a pathetic character, caught in the meshes of her base selfishness. She plagued Bernard on his every meeting with Rose Mary over his attentions to her. This was ridiculous, for Rose Mary in the meantime had married Walter Troumestre and was loyal to her own husband. Though she had always loved Bernard, she did not, at this time, encourage anything but friendship. Nevertheless, Blanche's continual wrangling added fuel to what Bernard himself once thought was only an infatuation. As Baring says in another of his novels:

Indeed, it often happens that when a woman is jealous without a cause, the false cause with which she upbraids the man she loves becomes a real one, and it is her own doing. She puts it into his head.15

Later, Rose Mary did give cause for provocation, but it was nothing compared to all the seething imaginary causes lurking in Blanche's imagination. When she was younger Blanche had prayed,

Let me have any misfortune that may have to be endured, but let him be spared.

There is nothing I cannot endure, but he is so little versed in the grammar of grief and sorrow; he is such a novice, such a beginner. I know he must go through the harsh school of life, but don't let the lessons be too hard for him.  

Now it was she who made the lessons harsh and seemed to delight in doing so. 

Dissatisfied as she was with her marriage, Blanche sought satisfaction elsewhere. Every new man who met her seemed captivated by her charm, though she denied any deliberate flirtation. "The situation saddened her, for she said to herself, 'Why do I have the power of apparently fascinating everybody except the only man in the world I care for?'"  

Were her intentions as innocent as she claimed? When a casual acquaintance, a priest, discussed with Blanche this problem of her being a charmeuse, she interpreted his mind and said: 

Please don't say what you were going to say...you were going to say I don't dislike it...I suppose I don't in a way; that is to say, I like people to be kind to me, to be nice to me, to praise me, to flatter me, if you like. I can't help that, because sometimes I feel starved and cold, and I am cold and hungry and long for warmth and food; but I promise and swear that I would never lift a finger to try and make any one fond of me, that when those two boys came here, I never gave them a thought. How could 

16M. Baring, *Cat's Cradle*, p. 256. 

17Ibid., p. 517.
I'm old enough to be Horace Crane's mother. After all, Bernard asked them. I didn't. I have often seen Eustace Lee before, and he has never paid the slightest attention to me. I thought he put me among the people who are over. If you knew the whole story of my life, you would understand.\(^\text{15}\)

Does not this last line obliterate all her preceding arguments? What the priest would understand would be her selfish seeking for satisfaction, for pity, for love. Recognizing Blanche's self-centeredness and her cankerous jealousy over Rose Mary, one is almost to conclude that she was a bad Catholic; yet in the beginnings of her conversion, she was very sincere. An analysis of this earlier period of her life is necessary for a full understanding of the final solution to her problem.

Shortly after her marriage to Guido, Blanche attended a Requiem Mass. There she felt that few Catholics present had really loved the deceased. They were only there as a matter of duty.

"Have they any religion?" she wondered. And this led to the thought — had she any religion? "I don't suppose I have," she said to herself. She thought of what she had been taught as a child, first by her mother and then by "Lud." She had never questioned it. She now felt too tired morally even to think of it. "I only know one thing," she thought — "it's no help to me."\(^\text{19}\)

\(^{18}\text{Ibid., pp. 523-524. Italics not in the original.}\)

\(^{19}\text{Ibid., p. 97.}\)
In spite of these words, she turned to the *Imitation* for solace. Here she found the voice of Truth speaking, it seemed, directly to her. Then the thought of becoming a Catholic relentlessly pursued her. One difficulty she had in common with many outside the Church. Admitting the divine integrity of the Catholic Church, she objected to the lives of some of her members. But Catholics, a friend observed, are not free from human weakness. Bad Catholics might be worse were it not for the Church. Blanche saw the reasonableness of this argument, but another obstacle had to be met. Her Anglican aunt, fearing Blanche's desire to "go over to Rome," invited her to St. Anselm's High Church in London.

She felt, however, that it was all wrong, and it was while sitting in this dim High Church, during a sung "Mass," where on the altar six candles were burning and where the air was thick with the smell of incense, that she realised that she did not feel face to face with reality here; not only that, but she knew where she had felt reality, and that was when in the dark side street she had witnessed the procession of the Viaticum being taken to the sick man, the kneeling crowd, the lamps, the boy ringing the bell...

"That was real; this isn't," she said.

"I may put off the hour, but I know

20Ibid., p. 187.

21Ibid., p. 178.
now that whatever happens to me, if I am honest with myself, I shall have to be a Catholic some day, whatever drawbacks it may entail, however inconvenient it may be; but what a miserable creature I am to talk of drawbacks and inconveniences face to face with such a privilege, so superhuman an adventure!

"I may put it off, but an invisible rope is pulling me surely to my destination."22

When she approached Father Byrne for instructions, he was surprised that she had not read much about religion. "She had reached her conclusions from life and not from literature."23 At her first Mass as a Catholic she realized words would fail her if she should try to explain its beauty to friends outside the Church.

If you spoke of the beauty they thought you meant architecture, stained glass, incense, music, or flowers. It was not aesthetic beauty; it was the satisfaction of the soul in the presence of reality—the only reality; the eternal, the everlasting, the supernatural. . . . 24

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22Ibid., pp. 194-195. This motif is often found in literature. One example would be George Herbert's poem "The Pulley". More recent is this statement from Brideshead Revisited in which Waugh quotes Chesterton on God's mercy to the sinner. "I caught him" (the thief) "with an unseen hook and an invisible line which is long enough to let him wander to the ends of the world and still to bring him back with a twitch upon the thread." Evelyn Waugh, Brideshead Revisited (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1946), p. 220.

23Ibid., p. 200

24Ibid., p. 203.
Taking into consideration the fact that every conversion is the result of divine grace, for Blanche, the reading of the *Imitation* and a deep love for Catholic liturgy were the remote causes of her conversion.

Blanche's conflict over accepting the Faith entailed much less difficulty than Fanny Choyce's or Joan Brendon's, each of whom struggled without ever actually becoming Catholics. Her real trial, once she had accepted the Faith, was to live it.

At intervals she would decide to seek advice from a priest; however, rarely did she reveal all, because she feared the reproach she might receive. Her trouble centered in pride, for she depended too much upon herself. Seldom was there mention of her praying for strength. "The fact of the matter is, I haven't enough Faith," she had once said to Father Gardiner, a statement which indicated that she did not trust enough in God. Particularly did she lack confidence in God concerning her relations with Bernard.

Blanche constantly insisted to herself that she must be fair to Rose Mary, that Rose Mary could not help Bernard's loving her. Her hatred of Rose Mary became hideous to witness (only the reader is permitted this view). It reached a climax when Rose Mary fell seriously ill after the birth of her second child. When Rose Mary was thought to be dying, Blanche was aware of Bernard's grief.

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25M. Baring, *Cat's Cradle*, pp. 228, 509.

26Ibid., p. 226.
Blanche felt a stab of pity... she no longer felt the gnawing canker, and in that second she realized that up till this minute her love for Bernard had been an entirely selfish love. She had in loving him thought only of herself... In that second she offered a silent prayer: "Please, dear Lord, let Rose Mary get well, and make Bernard happy."27

Her renunciation, though sincere at the time, was not lasting. Bernard's growing love for Rose Mary, who did recover, continued to cause Blanche untold pain. Bitterness warped her soul. Resignation to God's will was alien to her. Then God used a new attack. He used Bessie Lacy, Blanche's sister-in-law, who detested Blanche because of the attention Stephen, Bessie's husband, paid Blanche. Bessie had overheard Bernard telling Rose Mary, among other things, that she (Rose Mary) was the one thing that counted most in his life.28 In a letter to Blanche, Bessie recorded the entire conversation. What hurt Blanche most keenly was that her belief that she had always been the greater love in Bernard's life was now shattered. Bessie's letter had a quite different effect on Blanche from the one she had intended; "...it reached Blanche's soul and wounded that. Bessie's aim had been a lower one."29 Seeing herself in a true light for the first time in her life, Blanche admitted she deserved this suffering.

27Ibid., p. 512.
28Ibid., p. 658.
29Ibid., p. 692.
"No; there is nothing unjust about it. It is quite right, and I shall bear it. And whatever happens now, I shall do nothing to make it worse... or shall I? It is rash to speak like that. Help me, dear God, dear Lord, not to, because I know how easy it is. Help me to pay the debt I owe, that is already there to be paid, without adding to it. Otherwise, it will be a greater sum than I can ever meet."

She felt that around her there was a great emptiness, an arid, endless wilderness, a long, long, wide, wide loneliness — "It is all my fault," she said. "I have been selfish all my life, and I have done nothing but make others unhappy because I have always thought of myself and not of them. I have always thought of myself with regard to Bernard, of myself with regard to Walter, of myself with regard to Guido, of myself with regard to Adrian, of myself with regard to all of them — Horace Crane, Eustace Lee, Stephen — even as far back as Sydney Hope. It has always been the same story... self, self... self, vanity... thirst for appreciation... and yet I never meant to do harm... I suppose that is the worst of excuses... . "

As she prayed for grace finally to overcome her selfishness and to accept God's will, even though it would entail suffering, "she knew now that she would never grudge Bernard his love for another.... And from the act of inner self-sacrifice and renunciation she made, came balm; just as, hitherto, from every act of self-indulgence she had ever made, had come a sense of scorching ashes."

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30 Ibid., p. 695.
31 Ibid., p. 697.
The weak woman who was Blanche became strong through her final surrender to Infinite Love. After a struggle comparable, says one author, to that of Shakespeare's Desdemona or Tolstoy's Anna Karenina, Blanche had conquered.32 Thus, very late in her life, but not too late, Blanche had learned the way of trust which is also the way of peace.

**Daphne Adeane:** Daphne

Daphne Adeane, the title character of the novel so named,33 is dead when the story begins, but her effect on the men who loved her and upon two women who never met her forms the theme of the book. The two other women, Hyacinth Wake and Fanny Choyce, contribute almost as much to this novel as does Daphne herself. For that reason they will be given separate treatment.

Because Daphne Adeane was dead before the story opened, she is Baring's mystery woman. Preternatural elements, such as dreams in which Daphne appeared haunting those she loved, and portraits from which she seemed to speak, intermittently occurred in the novel, not without objection from some critics.34 These devices were necessary only because Daphne had no other way of presenting her real self. People who knew her gave their views throughout the book, but these were not always the whole view. Critics differ in their opinions of

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Daphne. One calls her jealous and possessive, haunting the men who once loved her.\textsuperscript{35} Another refers to her as "...a pietist with a domestic chapel all her own for meditation and prayer."\textsuperscript{36} The term, "pietist" is an unfortunate one, if by that he means artificiality or affectation in religious practices. That Daphne was a much more solid character than such a word would imply will soon be apparent. Father Martindale climaxes all opinions by stating that Daphne left everyone guessing.\textsuperscript{37} To some extent, however, the mystery surrounding her can be solved.

When Daphne married Ralph Adeane, she married for love. He was devoted to her and, though not a Catholic, agreed that their two sons be raised as Catholics. After seven years of married life, at the age of twenty-five, Daphne died.

During her married life she was the center of a crowd of friends who were always welcome at her home. Two of these, Leo Dettrick, a writer and Dr. Francis Greene, a nerve specialist, loved Daphne to an extraordinary degree. She, apparently, was never anything more nor less than a good friend to them both. In the novel, when Francis Greene recalled Leo Dettrick's frequent visits to Daphne's home, Fanny Choyce asked,

\textsuperscript{35}Ibid., p. 622.
\textsuperscript{36}H. L. Stuart, op. cit., p. 723.
Wasn't Mr. Adeane jealous?

Oh dear no! — you see he understood. He was a man who said little, but he understood his wife.

You mean he knew that she cared only for him?

He knew that she only liked Leo as a friend; as she liked everyone else. 38

Fanny discovered Leo Dettrick's version to be similar: "She only cared for her husband and her children."39 Later he remarked, "I knew she didn't love me and could never love me."40 Both men, then, were convinced that Daphne loved neither of them.

In reply to Fanny's question whether Daphne had ever repented her early marriage, Leo Dettrick said: "If she had, she would never have shown it. Nobody would have ever known."41 That one sentence epitomizes Daphne's character. Cuthbert Lyley, who knew Daphne well, remarked that nobody ever knew whether she loved either man.42 None, living at the time, could ever perceive Daphne's inner self. When Lady Jarvis remarked that Daphne was "crazily in love"43 with Leo Dettrick, she was only guessing. Mr. Baring, it seems, wants the

38 M. Baring, Daphne Adeane, p. 257.
39 Ibid., p. 144.
40 Ibid., p. 148.
41 Ibid., p. 145. [Italics not in the original.]
42 Ibid., p. 200.
43 Ibid., p. 213.
reader to know the truth, to see every angle, and to arrive at a conclusion. That is why he presents Daphne through the medium of dreams. In a dream, Fanny Choyce saw Daphne and asked her whether she had loved Leo Dettrick.

"No," said Daphne, "I was never in love with Leo — never, never for a moment — but I was in love. Ah! so in love, with the other one." Daphne did not give the name of the "other one," but the reader knows she referred to Francis Greene. Later, again in a dream, Daphne haunted Fanny by coming between her (Fanny's) and Francis Greene's happiness.45

Francis Greene, too, had a strange experience. He had been carrying on an affair with Fanny Choyce for three years when he was brought face to face with a portrait of Daphne.

The picture seemed to be alive. Daphne seemed to be there, to be looking at him and speaking to him, and looking at him with so gentle a reproach...."You have not forgotten me," the picture seemed to say, "not your old, old friend?...You are not going to leave me? you are not going to forget me? you are not going to play me false?"46

But all this occurred after Daphne's death. When she was alive, however, "her pretense of light-heartedness never failed, her guard

\[44\] Ibid., p. 242.
\[45\] Ibid., p. 275.
\[46\] Ibid., pp. 314-315.
was never down, and the man who watched for a sign that she returned his adoration watched in vain.\footnote{47}

One critic believes that the struggle to resist this passion killed her.\footnote{48} Leo Dettrick explained her early death as the result of having expected too much from life, of having seen a fairy castle dwindle into a wooden hut, yet of having pretended it was a castle.\footnote{49}

Dr. Francis Greene, typically medical, said Daphne should never have stayed in the English climate; she did it for her husband's sake, because she thought he preferred it. "She had a will of steel in a frail body, and I think the effort of her will killed her. She was meant for the sun and the South."\footnote{50}

In considering the influence of Daphne's Catholic faith on her life, we shall attempt to prove that she was neither, as Mr. Reilly suggests, a victim of her emotions, nor an escapist as Leo Dettrick would have us believe, but rather that her "will of steel" triumphed in a way undreamed of by the three men who loved her. Daphne Adeane had always been a Catholic. When she married Ralph Adeane it was understood that she would practice her religion, and that the children would be raised as Catholics. Often her friends mentioned her love of prayer. One said, "It was wonderful to see her kneel in the chapel

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{47} J. J. Reilly, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 194.
\footnote{48} \textit{Loc. cit.}.
\footnote{49} M. Baring, \textit{Daphne Adeane}, p. 147.
\footnote{50} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 249.
\end{footnotes}
at Seyton."51 The chapel was the work of her hands, and after her
death Leo Dettrick wrote of it, "Curiously enough this was the only
room in the house that did not feel empty. Here I could imagine that
she might really walk in, and kneel down, as I so often saw her do."52
These examples do not intend to pass a verdict on her holiness. Mere
pious exercises could not effect a supernatural "will of steel."53
That her life was shot through with the supernatural, Leo Dettrick
expressed very pointedly. "Her sheer existence proved to me the ex­
istence of God."54 If she had been a mediocre or superficial Catholic,
it would not have escaped Mr. Dettrick's piercing insight. He even
noticed an indefinable sadness about her. He said that it was due to
something deep, something profound, that she did not express.55 Two
reasons may be advanced for this impression she gave. The first was
that her struggle to return her husband's love cost her violence,
though he never suspected.56 Granting this reason, an even stronger
one, though only implied, was Daphne's dissatisfaction with her own

51Ibid., p. 201.
52Ibid., p. 138.
53Ibid., p. 249.
54Ibid., p. 148.
55Ibid., p. 148.
return of love to God. Struggle she did to accept God's will. Having faced reality and having recognized her own weakness, she depended just that much more upon divine grace. Sublimated, her love for Francis Greene was transformed from a false idol to an offering pleasing to God. Certainly this cost her intense suffering, but it is difficult to understand that the struggle ultimately led to her death. That would seem to infer frustration. Yet, at the same time, Mr. Reilly names her, "...the most influential character [of the novel] because morally the strongest, spiritually the most valiant." To her, better than to any of Baring's other women characters, may be applied Leon Bloy's phrase, "The more of a saint a woman is, the more of a woman she is."  

**Daphne Adeane: Hyacinth Wake**

Another woman to be considered from the same novel is Hyacinth Wake. Though a Catholic from early childhood, Hyacinth put her religion in the background by encouraging the attentions of Michael Choyce, even though she was married to Basil Wake. Her husband, deeply in love with his wife, tolerated Michael, never suspecting the true situation. Finally Hyacinth saw that Basil's suspicions had been aroused; she broke relations with Michael. Every attempt Michael made to contact her was immediately blocked by Hyacinth herself. Not one slight

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57 Ibid., p. 194.  
58 Loc. cit.  
60 M. Baring, Daphne Adeane, pp. 67, 78, 91, 105.
respite did she allow herself. At a party where the two were brought together, Hyacinth refused Michael even a sign of recognition. Fanny Choyce, Michael's bride, who had learned all concerning Michael and Hyacinth, noticed her refusal and wondered. Was Hyacinth pretending, had she tired of Michael, or was she really heroic?61 In this last question, Fanny approached the truth, for Hyacinth's love for Michael had been too great to dissolve suddenly.

What motivated Hyacinth's heroism? One critic suggested that it was merely her fear of Basil's disapproval.62 But her total renunciation required some higher motive than this natural one. Fanny reached this conclusion after Hyacinth's death. She confessed to herself that Hyacinth had voluntarily renounced Michael for higher reasons than she (Fanny) could grasp.63 On this very point Fanny questioned Father Rendall who had known Hyacinth well.

I know that Catholics are often not better than other people — but what I want to get at is this: does the fact of being a practising Catholic make a difference to some one like Hyacinth when she is faced with a critical situation — say an operation — a serious operation? Would she face it more calmly — would it honestly be a help to her?

Yes, provided she had Faith, even although that Faith was purely the consent

61Ibid., pp. 87-88.
63M. Baring, Daphne Adeane, p. 109.
that arises from reason and had nothing emotional about it.

Yes, but my whole point is this: was Hyacinth, because she was a Catholic, able to accept the mystery — did she accept it? Did she think, "this makes it all right." or did she say to herself, "After all, this is a patent medicine like any other. It can't do any harm, it may do good"?

You mean to say, was her religion a help, a reality?

Yes, in supreme moments — before an operation, for instance? (But what Fanny really wanted to hear was whether her religion had ever influenced her conduct.)

If you had seen her you would not have asked the question.

Well, then, I think that's wonderful, I could never feel like that...Only perhaps situations, operations, war, may cause certain frames of mind.

But...Hyacinth Wake had the advantage and the benefit and assistance of the Faith all her life long, and not only at the time of her death.

And you think it always made a difference to her?

The whole difference.

As he said this Fanny felt instinctively that Hyacinth had made a great renunciation in her life, and that in making it, her religion had perhaps played a part....

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64Ibid., pp. 265-266.
Her religion had played a vastly important part. Basil admitted that. "Ah, if one could believe that things went on [after death]...if only...I can't, but she could; she felt certain...it was wonderful."65 Hyacinth must have been at peace with God to face death and eternity with courage. What she left for Michael was significant — a small St. Anthony medal. Nothing else. No long letter begging forgiveness or pleading for understanding. For Hyacinth that inordinate love had long been over, once her faith had become a reality. This was her triumph. By cooperation with grace in overcoming herself, she rose to the fullness of a faith that she had professed all her life.

Daphne Adeane: Fanny Choyce

In the same novel is Fanny Choyce, whom Baring treats even more fully than either Daphne or Hyacinth. Fanny's interest in both Daphne Adeane and Hyacinth Wake was perfectly natural. Although Fanny had never met Daphne, their lives had crossed because of a marked resemblance Fanny bore to her predecessor and because the same two men, Leo Dettrick and Francis Greene, entered the lives of both women. Fanny's admiration for Hyacinth's renunciation of the man she loved, Fanny's husband Michael, was brought out in the preceding pages.

Michael Choyce had proposed to Fanny when she was not yet twenty. Her joy was immeasurable. Immediately following their marriage, their relationship was strained, but Fanny could not explain why. Her discovery, that for several years preceding his marriage Michael had been carrying on a liaison with Hyacinth Wake and that he still loved her,

65Ibid., p. 196.
aroused bitter disillusionment. Even for a woman with a strong faith, this would be difficult to accept. But the extent of her "faith" was an admiration for the early Greek and Roman paganism. This is not exactly an indictment, for she chose the best in their philosophy, thus attaining a higher scale of values than the modern pagan. She said, for instance, "I like that kind of thing [the Classics of Greece and Rome]... the absence of sentiment...looking things in the face...accepting. It is all so clean and straight, business-like, and there is no nonsense about it." Nevertheless, when it was a question of applying this doctrine of stoical acceptance, she completely failed. She was so despondent that she took no interest in anything. Even the interior decoration of her home and the arrangement of her garden, which she normally would have delighted in doing, were now relegated to Michael's Aunt Esther. While Michael remained in London, Fanny isolated herself in their country home, claiming that London was unbearable.

She gave herself up to her sorrow; to her sense of irretrievable loss, disappointment, and failure. She felt that she had made the supreme mistake of thinking that nothing could mend or remedy the disaster.

Obviously, she realized her error, realized she was capable of freeing herself from the groove into which she had fallen, but she deliberately

66 Ibid., p. 76ff.
67 Ibid., p. 124.
68 Ibid., p. 80. [Italics not in the original.]
refused to do so.  

Even lower did she sink when her third child died a month after birth. Michael and her doctor persuaded her to accompany her husband on a trip to Egypt. There Fanny experienced a revitalization. She became extremely popular. Her husband really began to love her, but she told herself that it was too late; her love for him had died.

On their return, she told Michael that she would prefer remaining in London, instead of retiring to the country. "She felt that she had sorrowed and brooded long enough, that she had been selfish, that she was being a wet blanket on Michael's life, and she resolved to turn over an entirely new leaf." She felt guilty because she was not able to return her husband's love. Her interest in life was heightened by her friendship with Leo Dettrick, the one-time admirer of Daphne Adeane. Fanny's inspiration enabled Leo to return to his writing, something he had not attempted since Daphne's death. Theirs was not a sentimental relationship, nor did Fanny desire that. Leo's seeming forgetfulness of Daphne puzzled Fanny. This dilemma of fickleness presented itself to Fanny very often; each time it bothered her. Her own husband, who was once devoted to Hyacinth Wake, was an example. In a conversation with Lady Jarvis, Fanny asked, "Do you think...that people — that men

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69Ibid., pp. 76, 80, 81, 105.

70Ibid., p. 158.
well, men and women if you like -- always forget?" Curiously enough, Fanny seemed to leave herself out of that group, though she no longer loved her husband.

With the outbreak of World War I, Michael enlisted and Fanny volunteered her services as a nurse in France. There she met Francis Greene, who became for her the great passion of her life. Now all her level-headedness regarding people who "forget" had disappeared. She knew that she could give up Michael and her children, even Peter, her favorite. "She loved Francis better than anything. She was obsessed.... It was beyond reason. She knew she could never give him up." Their relationship continued for three years. When news came of Michael's missing in action, Fanny felt no remorse. Almost hopefully she proceeded with plans to marry Francis. Just as final arrangements for their marriage were being completed, word arrived that Michael had been found in Belgium. Because he had temporarily lost his memory, Fanny had not been notified sooner. Her determination not to give up Francis remained firm. She would tell Michael all, for she was convinced that to live with him now would be to live a lie. Many times the reader believes Fanny justified her illicit relationship with Francis by telling herself that she had absolutely no regrets. There are times,

71 Ibid., p. 211.
72 Ibid., p. 280.
73 Ibid., p. 293.
74 Ibid., pp. 279, 282.
though, when one perceives the undercurrent of conflict, a remorse lurking there, waiting for grace to express itself.

Proof of her interior conflict was her interest in and reaction to the Catholic faith. Though she had once "looked upon Catholicism as le Christianisme au grand complet, and it was against that complete creed that she felt most rebellious," yet gradually she questioned the justification of such an attitude.

Perhaps that's what I need, what I am without, thought Fanny. Faith — faith in something, even if only in oneself, and that, I imagine, presupposes a faith in something beyond and outside oneself — outside the world. The grain of mustard seed. I haven't got it. I have no grain of faith and no grain of love, except for Peter....And supposing I had faith? What then? What should I do? Go to Mr. Rowley's church in a different state of mind? Become a Catholic? Catholics? They have faith. Hyacinth probably had faith. Perhaps that was the secret of her life. Perhaps she went through a great deal. Poor Hyacinth!76

On another occasion she and Francis Greene visited a small French church.

The Litany of Loretto was said in the vernacular. Fanny found herself joining in to the monotonous responses, "Priez pour nous," mechanically, and the words, "Refuge des pêcheurs," "Consolatrice des affligés,"

75 Ibid., p. 92.

76 Ibid., p. 240.
"Secour des Chrétiens," stabbed her.77 Complete indifference would not have been affected by so simple a religious service. We venture to say that, in all probability, this was the first of many actual graces with which Fanny was favored. An obstacle to the acceptance of that grace, however, seemed to be her repeated avowals that she felt no remorse for her illicit relations with Dr. Francis Greene.78 Yet, in a visit to Westminster Cathedral where she lit a candle, she prayed, "If all this, dear God, means anything, teach me to understand it, and bless Francis. . . . If it's wrong, forgive us."79 This prayer does not coincide with her assertion that her conscience was at peace, nor with her denial of a personal God.80

This denial occurred in a serious conversation about her private life with Father Rendall.81 As far as she was concerned, she told Father, she knew that she was not going to return to Michael, for she had never lied to him and she could not give up Francis. What she wished to know was how Father would advise a Catholic woman had she told him this story. Father Rendall calmly assured her that he would


78Ibid., pp. 279, 282.

79Ibid., p. 276.

80Ibid., p. 297.

81Ibid., pp. 298-303.
tell such a penitent to return to her husband and to accept any feeling of being dishonorable (by not telling her husband anything) as part of her punishment. "In short, there is only one path open to you — that is, heroic self-sacrifice....By any other road you will only reach and create unhappiness." After Fanny argued that she could not believe in such a teaching, that all she was breaking was a man-made law, Father answered that, on the contrary, it was God's law she had broken, but there was still time to amend. She found this last hard to believe. Only a miracle would make her change her mind, she insisted. One last question Father put to her.

You say you are a Pagan. What is, in your opinion, the fundamental idea of Paganism? What is the essence of Greek tragedy?

"Sacrifice," said Fanny, without hesitation.

"There!" said Father Rendall, "Now believe me that in every act of sacrifice we make there is a balm, and in every act of self that we make there is an aftertaste of fire, smoke, dust, and ash." Fanny remained apparently unchanged by this conversation, until word reached her that Michael did not wish to return home because of a peculiar psychosis that Fanny no longer wanted him. She realized now what an almost irremediable situation she was in. She owed it to Michael to nurse him back to health, now that he was a broken man. She knew she

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82 Ibid., p. 299.
83 Ibid., p. 302.
could not desert him and must give up seeing Francis. "At the same
time...she felt a desolation, an estrangement, a blank, and an agony
that was beyond all words...infinite pain, infinite sadness, infinite
desire, infinite despair."\textsuperscript{84} Nothing but a bleak future faced her, she
thought.

In this mood she browsed through Michael's library. Attracted by
a black book, entitled \textit{Roman Missal}, she opened it and found Hyacinth
Wake's name. Later, in bed, she read the Order and Canon of the Mass
and the Holy Week liturgy.

...and then, as she laid down the book — and
it was past midnight — she said to herself,
"But surely all this is the incarnation of the
Greek idea...this is sacrifice...this is the
very thing...what I have been groping for all
my life...here it is. But then, if that is
so, then I...then I...must I one day be
a...Catholic?"...and her premises seemed
to have led her to a conclusion so tremendous,
so vast, so glorious, and so overwhelming
that she could scarcely bear to face it — as
if all of a sudden she had been brought face
to face with the sun rising out of a starless
night over a snowy mountain and flooding the
world with glory. . .

She shut her eyes, and she lay motionless
for a long time, and she felt the sense of
balm of which Father Rendall had spoken...then
she fell asleep.

The next morning when she woke up her
first sensation was that something terrible had
happened, and then as she became more wideawake
she said to herself, "No, not so terrible."

\textsuperscript{84}Ibid., p. 318.
She got up and felt calm.  

Brought face to face with the reality which is the Catholic religion, struck by the sufferings of a God-Man for her, she knew nothing but complete renunciation could satisfy now. Fanny welcomed Michael warmly. Hers was a total sacrifice, because it was made, not with bitterness, but with joy in the supernatural conviction that this was God's will for her. Now she even admitted to herself the seriousness of her guilt. 

Fanny Choyce's life proved that reason alone cannot suffice, that supernatural motivation is necessary, and that only by conformity to the Divine will is lasting peace to be found. 

"Velut mare contritio mea," the theme of Daphne Adeane, is a concise summary of the lives of Daphne, Hyacinth, and Fanny. All three had to choose between accepting or refusing an illicit love. Their refusal, which all three ultimately made, was at first a cause of deep sorrow to them. On this earth it will always be so. Yet suffering is not incompatible with joy. True joy is of the spirit, found in conformity to God's will. Pleasure is not joy, but mere sham leaving bitterness in its place. These women learned, with the help of grace, to sacrifice sensual pleasure for the joy of a peaceful conscience. 

"Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh for joy." (Luke 6:22)  

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85Ibid., pp. 319-320.  
86Ibid., p. 321.  
87M. Baring, Daphne Adeane, frontispiece.  
Truly can it be said of this novel that it was permeated by the Catholic teaching of sacrifice. 89

**Darby and Joan:** Joan Brendon

A less colorful leading lady takes the stage in **Darby and Joan**. 90 On first reading, Joan Brendon strikes one as being something of an enigma. The fact that there is so much left unsaid about her is just another example of Baring's insight. Undoubtedly Joan's faith-less life is responsible for giving a sensation of emptiness in the reader; yet even Joan has redeeming qualities.

Joan Brendon was seriously in love with Alexander Luttrell and believed him to be in love with her. Through a messenger's error, Alexander's letter declaring his love for her never arrived, and Joan believed that he made a game of captivating women. Brokenhearted, Joan avoided any occasion which might throw her with Alexander. He, believing Joan had never really taken him seriously, was attracted by her cousin, Agatha Cantillon, and proposed. Shortly before his marriage to Agatha, Alexander had an opportunity to explain to Joan the original mistake about the proposal letter. Joan's loyalty and love for Agatha was so great, that Joan would not hear of his breaking the engagement. "It would kill Agatha. Nothing would make me marry you now — nothing, nothing." 91 Alexander argued that Agatha would get over it, but Joan

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90 M. Baring, *Darby and Joan*.

replied, "No, never. She is the gentlest, most delicate thing in the world. She is far better than you or me."92

What a contrast between Joan and Princess Blanche! Such solicitude for another's happiness when one's own happiness is at stake borders on the heroic. Many, doubtless, would say that Joan was more entitled to Alexander than was Agatha; many, too, would accuse Joan of actually doing wrong in permitting Alexander to marry Agatha whom he did not love. All, however, must agree that she was selfless in this decision. To her it was the correct thing to do, a duty involving unpleasantness, but a duty, nevertheless. Seldom does a novel reveal such consideration of one woman for another. If Joan's story had ended here, it would have been worthwhile. But it does not.

After her marriage to Robert Keith, a devout Catholic, Joan was painfully aware of her own lack of faith. As a child she had been greatly influenced by her father who had regarded religion as sentimental superstition; yet he had warned her to respect orthodox religion, "Because ... one never knows. It may be true."93 This agnosticism Joan imbibed readily, although she had been baptized a Catholic at the request of her Irish nurse. Now in her marriage Joan sensed a spiritual emptiness, for she failed to share with Robert what was all-important to him, his faith. Their three children were instructed in the faith by a devout Florentine governess, who, Joan consoled herself, supplied for her own deficiency. When faced with a sincerely religious person, she

92Ibid., p. 84.
93Ibid., p. 8.
found herself full of admiration, but she detested pietists. One such was an acquaintance, Beryl. "Nothing irritated Joan more than Beryl's sentimental patronage of the Catholic saints and Catholic custom, practice, and ritual." One holy person in her acquaintance was her husband's sister, Margaret Baillie; however, there was a wall between them.

But no wall existed for Joan when speaking of spiritual matters to another friend, Dr. Valea, a devout Catholic. How a doctor could accept religion puzzled Joan. Science negated all that, she thought. He answered her challenge.

Science only teaches one how little one knows; that one knows nothing; and whatever one learns, too, that there is a margin for the unknown; the unknowable; the Divine.

I wish I could feel like that, but I can't. I am like the bad soil on which the grain fell; there is not even the excuse of thorns — just nothing; no soil.

That same note is struck often in the book. Joan's reiteration that she wanted to believe but could not, is hard to probe. Perhaps she suffered from that disease of the will that finds complete certitude difficult, as is the trouble with many who shrink from finalities.

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94 Ibid., p. 173.
95 Ibid., p. 159.
96 Ibid., pp. 141, 162.
Dr. Valea asked her whether she had ever really accepted sorrow, since for him, the death of his son had brought him back to a practice of his faith. "Sorrow built a bridge for me into the infinite. It often does."98 Admitting that her acceptance of sorrow had been nothing but a stoical one full of desolation, Joan found it hard to believe that resigned acceptance had any healing power. Despite this, one writer idolized Joan to the extent of often referring to her "patience and heroism."99 Such adulation seems an over-exaggeration. The only time it could be justifiable was in the last crisis of her life.

When Dr. Valea's duty called him back to Italy, Joan missed her dear friend. Not long after, she received news of his death, together with a pocket Dante in which he had inscribed her name. He referred her to Paradiso, Canto III, where Joan found underlined: In la sua volontade è nostra pace.100 Then came her crisis. By this time her husband had died, and she was faced with the tremendous decision of accepting or rejecting Francis Luttrell's proposal of marriage. Earlier in her life Joan had refused the first man she had loved because of consideration for her cousin who also loved him. Now no cousin was involved. Francis brought word that a girl whom he had known before meeting Joan would now have him. All he needed was Joan's word that

98Ibid., p. 162.


100M. Baring, Darby and Joan, p. 187.
he was free. Joan remembered a remark Dr. Valea had made to her.

"...to be unscrupulous is to put the soul in jeopardy. It is true, it would give you the momentary victory, the fleeting triumph."101

These words certainly applied now, thought Joan. "It was as if she had met the devil face to face and he was offering her an easy bargain."102

Francis was completely at her command; yet she knew he did not love her as much as she loved him. With deliberate courage she refused him.

Her conflict was over, thanks to the spiritual influence of Dr. Valea.

Though Joan never lived as a Catholic, in this instance of her life, a flicker of grace could account for her generous decision and strength.

Darby and Joan: Dorzan

A woman in the same novel, though with a less important role, was Dorzan, who is worth noting because of the unusual solution to her problem. She was a brilliant actress, sought after by many admirers among whom was Glencairn, who fell deeply in love with her. In answer to his proposals she replied that her lifelong desire had been to enter the convent and that she had now sworn to do so. Glencairn, having given up all hope of winning her, ceased pressing his cause. It is not difficult to imagine his dismay when he encountered Dorzan, whom he had believed to be in a convent, and discovered that she had married another man. Her explanation?

It was my only safety. That or the convent.

101Tbid., p. 212.
102Tbid., p. 211.
The convent would have been better, but I let Alfredo persuade me. You see, he has always loved me, long before I knew you. He was more than a lover to me. He was a friend — a saviour. 103

This is the last heard of Dorzan. After her husband was "accidentally" shot by Glencairn (who confessed solely to his own wife that it was deliberate murder) at the latter's hunting party, Dorzan entered a convent. It is well she did not do so earlier, for, from available evidence, the step at that time would have been merely an escape. Even her marriage to Alfredo was that. Perhaps her encounters with sin as a single woman had left her fearful of her own weakness. Marriage seemed an answer. Later, as a religious, she probably regretted her former pusillanimity, but we are not permitted that view of Dorzan.

The Lonely Lady of Dulwich: Zita Harmer

The last woman to be considered in this chapter is Zita Harmer, the "lonely lady." 104 Her marriage with Robert Harmer was empty, primarily because of a lack of sympathetic understanding between her and her husband. Their married life cannot be described as anything but barren and frigid. When, therefore, a young poet, Jean de Bosis, Zita's ardent admirer, tried to convince her that happiness lay with him, she was severely tempted. Plans for the elopement had been set. Zita was determined to leave Robert, until she read by his expression

103 Ibid., p. 91.

that he knew all. Her resolution wavered. Here her delicacy of conscience saved her. She could not go through with such disloyalty. Jean waited in vain; Zita remained with Robert.

Zita is one of the few Baring women who had been raised a Catholic. Nowhere does the author indicate that it was her faith which was responsible for her withdrawal from an illicit love affair. Yet the reader is convinced that only such an explanation is feasible, in view of the mutual passion existing between the lovers.

Years later, when the two met again, Jean was just as ardent in pressing his suit, but Zita seemed completely detached. In reality, as Jean suspected, another man had entered her life, another man who was completely oblivious to what was happening. Walter Price, an American newspaperman, delighted by Zita's charm, regarded her as a loyal friend. Robert enjoyed Price's company; hence, he was often a visitor at the Harmer home. Never once did Zita betray that her feelings toward Walter were deeper than those mere friendship would allow. All she hoped for was the opportunity to do something for Walter which would prove her devotion and, possibly, open his eyes. Such an opportunity presented itself in the death of her former devotee, Jean de Bosis, who had become a decadent writer with an international reputation. Naively, Walter, in speaking with Zita, expressed a desire to get a story of de Bosis' private life. Here, thought Zita, was her chance to prove her love for Walter. She would give him a story which would shock both him and the world. Not sparing herself,
Zita revealed all concerning her relations to Jean de Bosis. When the story appeared the following day, though her name was not revealed, since Zita had not actually referred to herself by name, people who really knew her immediately sensed it to be her.

Here we see to what limits a woman will go for the man she loves. Not once did she consider Robert's reaction. In fact, she did not really think, but seemed guided by emotion. Any cost, thought she, as long as it would win for her Walter's love.

She never saw Walter again. The morning the article appeared, he left a sincere letter of gratitude stating that he owed his promotion to the sensational story Zita gave him; now he would at last have a substantial income to offer his fiancée, Sylvia Luke. Stunned, Zita was prepared for anything. She had had no idea that Walter had been secretly engaged. That same morning Robert read the scandal. His lawyer arranged a settlement with Zita, and she never saw her husband again. Resignedly, she spent the remaining twenty-seven years of her life in the small village of Dulwich.

The problem Zita faced within herself differed from that of Blanche; hers was not fundamentally one of selfishness, but rather one of misdirected abnegation. This interpretation appears a false one, unless it is clarified. Zita was absolutely prepared to renounce everything — reputation, husband, and security — for Walter. In a sense, this could be mistaken for selfishness had she any assurance the story would give her Walter. But she had not! And she accepted her penalty without
any complaint, without any scenes. Had she been a Blanche, she would have ruined Walter's marriage; instead, she quietly withdrew. As we shall see, Zita Harmer finally found an outlet for her womanly desire to give.

In the solitude of her voluntary exile in Dulwich, differing much from Joan Brendon's empty loneliness, it is probable that Zita became a true contemplative. This conclusion was drawn from an entry in the notebook found in her desk after her death. It was dated "Good Friday, 1900," and it read, "Amor meus Crucifixus est."105 What a volume that contains! Those entries must have been made only after deep deliberation, for within twenty-six years, there were but three of them. One writer refers to them as "so haunting and so inevitably the only possible last word of this perfect story."106 Without undue exaggeration we may conclude from the entry recorded above, that Zita spent the years from 1900 to her death in 1920 in prayer and suffering.

That she suffered was rather symbolically illustrated. A small gold seal, also found in the desk, left an impress of a face enclosed in a heart from which a flame arose, and the inscription was Saignant et brûlant. So the novelette ends.107 We have every reason to believe that Zita's sorrow, like that of the other women, was turned into peace.

105 Ibid., p. 150.
106 Ethel Smyth, Maurice Baring, p. 301.
107 M. Baring, The Lonely Lady of Dulwich, p. 150.
From the above analysis we have seen that, despite the perversity of the women, with the help of grace they were victorious. It was almost as though Baring had spoken to them in the words of a contemporary Catholic poet:

Make ready for the Christ, Whose smile, like lightning,
Sets free the song of everlasting glory
That now sleeps, in your paper flesh, like dynamite.108

Reverting to a term used earlier, this is what is meant by Catholic optimism. Baring's women characters experienced interior struggles and at times even went against their consciences, but in the end they learned the meaning of the freedom of the children of God.

CHAPTER III

THE IMPORTANCE AND INFLUENCE OF THE WOMEN

A general consideration of the influence exerted by the women of the novels upon others is the problem of this chapter. It is a well-known fact that the women of a nation determine the spiritual strength of that nation. Hearts are healed or crushed, homes united or disrupted, talents developed or frustrated, depending upon the selflessness or selfishness of women. Father Vann, in his excellent study on woman, ventures to say, "It depends upon the extent to which woman possesses within her, like Catherine of Siena, the heart of Christ, whether her summons shall lead men to heaven or to hell."¹ And Baring was not unaware of this influence by any means. Even in his novels in which a man was the main character, a woman was largely responsible for the hero's fate. Two such novels were C. and The Coat Without Seam, each of which will be considered from the viewpoint of woman's influence. C. is probably the best novel for measuring woman's effect upon the principal man, for even in Caryl Bramsley's early boyhood women played an important part. His mother had never really loved C., as he was called. As a very young boy C. felt he was not wanted, because of his mother's negative attitude. The only comfort he ever received was from

the cook, and when he fled to her for rescue during his frightening
nightmares, he was severely punished. His mother belonged to the class
known as "respectable." Her code of life consisted in this: "Certain
things could be done, indeed, must be done, certain opinions accepted,
and certain books could be read; others could not."2 Probably the most
bitter castigation of her class was made by another novelist, Leon Bloy:

A female Saint may fall into the mire, or a
prostitute raise herself to the Heavens, but
neither of the two can ever become a "re-
spectable woman" -- because the terrible
barren, futile creature called a respectable
woman, who of old refused the hospitality
of Bethlehem to the Infant God, is eternally
impotent to escape from her nothingness by
any fall or any ascent.3

Because of his mother's interference, C. was prevented from marrying the
girl that he loved and from pursuing the profession for which he was
equipped by nature. His mother maneuvered to get him into the diplo-
matic service both to satisfy her monetary designs and to remove him
from the vicinity of Beatrice Lord, who, she decided, was too poor to
be a satisfactory match for C.

In Beatrice Lord is found the embodiment of true womanhood. A
devout Catholic, Beatrice showed C. in countless ways that her faith
was a reality to her. When he would question her about her belief,
she would answer him sincerely, not acting as though she meant to
convert him. Had she followed any other course, C. would have resented

2M. Baring, C., p. 4.
3L. Bloy, op. cit., p. 127.
it, and the good she did do for him would have been lost. Like C.'s parents, hers, too, objected to their marriage, but primarily on the basis of religion. She respected their decision, and complied with their wishes that she marry a Mr. Fitzclare, a wealthy Catholic. Her husband turned out to be a bad sort; his life became a scandal, and only his early death brought Beatrice release from her suffering. Other suffering she had, however, throughout her life. C. re-entered her life, and on two different occasions begged her to marry him; but she refused, knowing that his real affections were centered on a Mrs. Bucknell. She felt that she had no right to involve C. in a step he would later regret. He knew she was right; yet, in going back to the other love, he felt ashamed — the thought of Beatrice looking at him, not reproachfully, but with infinite sadness reminded him of Christ and St. Peter. Even though C. asserted that he did not believe in prayer, Beatrice promised that she would pray for him daily. Once the remembrance of her prevented him from committing suicide. In another despondent mood he recalled a conversation that he had had with Beatrice after his brother Harry's death. At that time Beatrice's reflections on heaven and immortality had seemed mere theories, but now he thought, "If only, like Beatrice, he could see daylight somewhere . . . if only there was for him a bridge." Shortly before his own death, he left a brief

\[4\] M. Baring, C., p. 677.
message for Beatrice: "If I don't get well, tell Beatrice, . . . that I felt the bridge . . . felt there was a bridge . . . that's as far as I got . . . ."7 Significantly, memories of Beatrice and a hope for heaven filled C.'s last hours, while thought of the fatal Mrs. Bucknell was far removed from them.

Leila Bucknell entered C.'s life at the most promising point of his manhood when his literary power was beginning to assert itself and turned all to dust. C. was so completely distraught over her that, despite her cruelty to him by a shameful coquetry with many others, he could not free himself from her meshes. To understand what she was, one must know that even her best friend harboured no illusions regarding her character.8 Her cunning in fabricating excuses and writing apologies, when she saw it was to her advantage to reinstate a lover, was noxious. For C. she was a cause of unceasing torture, yet he could not live without her. His despair over her fickleness led him to temptations to murder and suicide. Admitting finally Leila's despicable trickery, he thought of his life as broken and wasted. So it would have been, had Leila been the only factor in it. After his death two of his friends, deploring his wasted talent and recognizing that he had lost it because of Leila's deteriorating influence, significantly referred to her as "Lesbia Illa."9

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7Ibid., p. 732.
8Ibid., p. 430.
9Ibid., p. 736. "Lesbia Illa" was the name the Latin poet, Catullus, used to address Clodia, a beautiful but shameless woman.
Having briefly considered the importance of three women with regard to the hero of one novel, we shall examine *The Coat Without Seam* which presents another view of woman's part in a man's life.

Here, as in C., the leading character is a man. Like C., Christopher Trevenen found his mother a source of grief.

He felt that his father thought him stupid, and that in his mother's eyes he was inefficient, because he was unable to respond to his father. She was always scolding him for his distractions and forgetfulness.¹⁰

His sole friend and confidant was his sister Mabel. Her death left him desperately lonely and tragically remorseful. He blamed himself, because he was certain that his sister's pneumonia had developed as a consequence of their bathing without permission, although they had also been caught in a rainstorm that same day. Added to this was his mother's accusation, "You will end by killing your sister,"¹¹ which so affected his sensitive nature that he considered himself a murderer.

Christopher was convinced that it was the bathing in the river that killed his sister, and this thought pursued him like a dreadful demon, and gnawed at his heart; but nothing in the world would have made him reveal his secret burden, nothing except perhaps sympathy and that alas! was not forthcoming.¹²

Grief-stricken, he acted in a queer fashion, which caused his mother to


¹¹Ibid., p. 10.

¹²Ibid., p. 23.
think him indifferent. Convinced that there was no forgiveness for his "sin," his attitude towards religion became one of apathy for the greater part of his life. His Catholic faith soon amounted to nothing more than a responsive interest in a relic — an interest which was due to the strange coincidence that legends surrounding this "coat without seam" cropped up immediately before every crisis of his life. Christopher's religious indifference completely escaped his mother's notice. So unmotherly had she been, that even her death left him unaffected. By way of contrast, several references were made throughout the novel to the part other mothers played in the lives of their sons.

One other woman in Christopher's life deserving mention was a widow, Madame Antoinette D'Alberg. With little difficulty, she had Christopher telling her the story of his life when their friendship was yet young. Together they discussed religion, and she was startled to see his bitterness towards God and eternity. She complained of her own insufficiency, for she had no definite religion, but the reader feels that she did possess a flicker of faith. To that flicker, possibly, may be attributed her refusal to marry Christopher, though she sincerely loved him. No direct reason is given, except that by refusing him she was saving him. By claiming this she possibly meant that she respected the religion which was his, even though he was not living up to it at the

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14Ibid., p. 295.
time. Another reason may have been their difference in ages, for she was a great deal older than he. At any rate, she married another, one who had sacrificed all for her and to whom she felt obligated. Once after her marriage she met Christopher. During their short conversation she told him she prayed daily for him and asked him whether he hated her.

He answered, "Hate you? I have felt bitter about everything else in my life, almost everything else and almost everyone else. I have felt bitter about almost all my friends, but never about you." His answer revealed that her love had enriched him. In truth, she was the only woman who succeeded in giving him confidence in himself, for she helped him release himself from his introvert tendencies, which had begun in the nursery. No direct spiritual influence could be perceived, such as Beatrice had exerted upon C., but in the matter of spiritual influence, the mysterious power of grace, which cannot be measured, must always be taken into consideration.

To recapitulate: Both C.'s and Christopher's lives were seen here in relation to the women who had figured in them. C.'s mother reminds one of other Baring dowagers: designing women, intent on making the "right" match for their offspring. Their interference usually resulted in a marriage of convenience, a factor largely responsible for the complications arising later in the novels. Shackled by the conventions and the shibboleths of society, these "respectable" women cared more for their social prestige than for eternal realities; consequently, their

15Ibid., pp. 311-312.
influence for good was negligible. Christopher's mother was just as lacking in motherliness, but it may be said to her credit that she despised the "worldliness" upon which the above class thrived.

Beatrice Lord was the only solid influence on C. If she was severe in refusing to marry C. when she was free to do so, it was because she, like Dante's Beatrice, hoped her severity would give him a sense of his ultimate destiny. It has been seen that her hope was at least faintly realized. She is the only one of Baring's feminine characters to have had such a spiritual influence upon the man she loved. Madame D'Alberg led Christopher to deeper thought upon eternal verities, but in a lesser degree than Beatrice.

Leila Bucknell was singular among Baring's portrayals. One critic refers to her as Baring's "Becky Sharp," because of her trifling attitude towards love.16 Another comments that she was "perhaps the only quite unredeemed character that I can recall in these novels."17 She was the most unprincipled of all the women considered in this study. Insofar as she contributed to C's failure as a poet, she can be compared to Zita Harmer,18 whose rejection of a poet-lover also resulted in his literary deterioration. Zita, however, refused him because of a sense of duty to her husband, whereas Leila rejected C. as a child would a

16J. J. Reilly, op. cit., p. 196.
18M. Baring, The Lonely Lady of Dulwich.
broken toy. Another woman mentioned previously who was acquainted with a writer, was Daphne Adeane. Her influence on Leo Dettrick's work, however, was not detrimental. He himself said of it: "I have never written since I knew her, and I never shall write till I die, a single sentence that is not impregnated with her, just as a wine-skin is impregnated by having held wine." From what has been said, it can be definitely seen that even a man's career lay in the hands of a woman. Baring recognized her as a definite force for good or for evil.

19M. Baring, Daphne Adeane, p. 153. Cf., Chapter two of this study, p. 25.
CHAPTER IV
EXTERNAL BEAUTY AND PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS
OF THE FEMININE CHARACTERS

In the two preceding chapters, Baring's Christian philosophy of life very obviously formed the basis for the entire study of the supernatural in relation to the women characters. Strangely enough, that same philosophy even enters into the present chapter, concerned though it is with mere external beauty and personality factors of the women, for, according to Miss Monroe, "The novelist who understands man's divine origin and destiny is interested in all the little things of life, because they serve as a bridge between two orders of life or as the channels of grace through which man is prepared for eternity."\(^1\) Such "little things" might be the women's personal beauty, their favorite books, musical and dramatic interests, friendships, hobbies, and any number of the incidentals which made up their daily life. Ronald Knox says that, although Baring wrote with facility, "the detailed building up of a story, the dresses the women ought to wear, and the menu which ought to grace a particular luncheon-party, cost him hours of conscientious application."\(^2\)

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\(^1\) N. Elizabeth Monroe, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

Our purpose is to show how Baring utilized these to the advantage of his women portrayals.

Many may object that Baring indulged in excessive description of the women's beauty. Careful scrutiny, however, proves that Baring's minute details were purposeful, always aiming at a richer character illumination. His power to convey the effect of woman's beauty was almost uncanny. Robert Speaight suggests that it was Homer's influence that made Baring so adept at portraying feminine beauty, since one of Baring's favorite descriptions was that of Helen coming along the wall. In Baring's passages referring to a particular woman's beauty, he took special delight in comparing her to something delicate, like flower petals or flute music. Of Madame D'Alberg he said, "She is beautiful. She reminds me of a spray of lilac." Then there was Daphne Adeane. "One didn't say, 'Is she beautiful?' One accepted the overwhelming fact of what she was — like the sound of a tune or the scent of a flower." In another picture of Daphne she was compared to a certain type of music "... what is called suspended, I think — I mean something that is asking for an answer, or one of those Spanish or Russian


4Robert Speaight, op. cit., p. 316.


6M. Baring, Daphne Adeane, p. 259.
tunes that never seem to end . . . that end on a question.7 The same "musical" tone was struck again:

... but she affected one like old-fashioned music, and the more you saw her, the more you wanted to see her. Seeing other people after seeing her was like hearing a pianoforte when one is used to older instruments, harpsichords, spinets. It is intolerable.8

The following is a picture of the young Princess Blanche: "... her charm, her delicacy, was like the fragrance of an exquisite flower, as aromatic as verbena, as sweet as a tea-rose."9 It is not difficult to contrast the simplicity of Blanche's appearance with the exotic Leila Bucknell, "who looked more than ever like a rare shining flower."10 Joan Brendon's beauty was not strange, but rather, enchanting. At eighteen she was described as possessing quality "... something genuine and noble — like a piece of old silver, or a Stradivarius, or a real Old Master . . ."11 These are but a few examples of many which unfold the charm Baring succeeded in conveying in his feminine descriptions. When he limited himself to a single phase of woman's beauty, he was just as successful.

7 Ibid., p. 145.
8 Ibid., p. 200.
9 M. Baring, Cat's Cradle, p. 80.
11 M. Baring, Darby and Joan, p. 11.
Apparently Baring considered a woman's eyes to be her most striking physical endowment, for he gave them much emphasis. Since he was concerned with the spiritual and the eyes do reflect the spirit, his preference seems quite natural. His versatility in eye description parallels the types of characters he created. To Daphne Adeane he gave "... soft, speaking, unforgettable eyes,"12 eyes that are "... like magic pools."13 Fanny Choyce's eyes were called a "dancing light,"14 for in her "everything is motionless except the eyes."15 One immediately notices the contrast between serious Madame Turcin's "large liquid eyes,"16 and coy Jane Ellis' "fair, laughing, insolent eyes."17 Leila Bucknell, the only real vampire in the lot, possessed violet eyes, "... liquid and appealing, ..."18 with chameleonic powers. Her exact antithesis, Beatrice Lord, had "... something in her very soft, azure eyes that suggested a floating, loving ocean; ..."19 The inarticulate Lady St. Cuthbert was the owner of still, green eyes.20

12M. Baring, Daphne Adeane, p. 145.
13Ibid., p. 260.
14Ibid., p. 128.
15Loc. cit.
17Ibid., p. 181.
19Ibid., p. 217.
20M. Baring, Cat's Cradle, p. 390.
The above examples will suffice to convince us of Baring's stress on eyes as an important feature of feminine beauty. The next aspect to be considered is a more elusive one.

Among the memorable elements in Baring's delineation of beauty is a certain impalpable quality, an indefinable "something" which places the heroine in a class apart from the other women in the novel. No matter how old she may become (in *Cat's Cradle*, for example, forty-four years of Blanche's life are covered) this quality seems to give her eternal youthfulness. We are given an excellent glimpse of this through Rose Mary, who jealously mused over Blanche's looks:

How does she manage it? . . . She puts me and every one else out, like a candle. She has no business to look like that. After all, her features are nothing wonderful; plenty of people have got finer eyes; she's got an extremely graceful figure, but, then, so have lots of people. She's over twenty-five years older than I am, and yet I feel slovenly and common beside her, as if I were made of some coarser texture and substance.21

On the same occasion an artist remarked on the appearance of Blanche:

All her beauty is in her atmosphere, and her grace, and her light, that shining light that seems to stream from her . . . It is intangible . . . . One couldn't, at least I couldn't, get it on to canvas. It's much too illusive.22

The identical intangibility in Leila Bucknell's appearance was marked

by C. (Caryl Bramsley) as he compared her with other women present at a luncheon.

They had the more obvious attributes of beauty, whereas Mrs. Bucknell's beauty was far less easy to define, grace was so important a part of it, and undefinable lines and curves, the ripple and changing lights of the chestnut hair under the large black hat, the slanting downward look of the eyes, the very long lashes...23

In his own life Baring was constantly aware of this element in the women he met. His autobiography is witness to that. There he referred to the ". . . undefinable rhythm"24 of Queen Alexandra's beauty, and recalled his youthful admiration for Mary Anderson's beauty ". . . that is beyond and above discussion . . . "25 Possibly the classic example proving Baring's "philosophy" of beauty is the following, also taken from his autobiography.

It is an order of beauty in which the grace of every movement, the radiance of the smile, and the sure promise of lasting youth in the cut of the face make you forget all other attributes, however perfect.26

Thus far we have considered the beauty of feminine features. There is still a slightly different phase of Baring's descriptions to be mentioned, namely, his artistic fashion plates. We are quite justified

23M. Baring, C., p. 405.
25Ibid., p. 54.
26Ibid., pp. 54-55.
in assuming that his awareness of woman's dress was spontaneous, for his autobiography abounds in specimens, which we can match with others from his novels. In one place he recalled a fancy dress ball:

. . . I remember a tall and blindingly beautiful Hebe, a dazzling Charlotte Corday, in grey and vermilion, a lady who looked as if she had stepped out of an Italian picture, with a long, faded Venetian red train and a silver hat tapering into a point, and another who had stepped from an old English frame, a pale figure in faded draperies and exquisite lace, with a cluster of historic and curiously set jewels in her hair . . . 27

One is struck by such passages because acute sensitivity to woman's attire is rare in the opposite sex. Men recognize the fact of a woman being well-dressed, but they ordinarily are incapable of furnishing a detailed account. But Baring's dexterity was conducive to his power as a novelist. In Cat's Cradle there also was a ball, and following is the description of Blanche:

She was . . . in sea-green satin, that watery blue-green with high lights in it (the colour of the Greek seas) that you often meet with in Van Dyck's pictures; she wore a pearl necklace and large pearl ear-rings, and one large pink carnation, and her hair was done Henrietta-Maria fashion, with a small chaplet of pearls at the back. 28

It is not to be wondered at that Ronald Knox says of Baring, "The utter

27 Ibid., pp. 176-177.
28 M. Baring, Cat's Cradle, p. 467.
simplicity of the décor suited his genius."29 His quick talent for prose figures and ingenious coloring can be noted in this passage written at Constantinople where he was waiting in a crowd to see the new Turkish Sultan. "At this moment, as I write, the colour of one woman's dress flashes before me — a brilliant cerulean, bright as the back of a kingfisher, gleaming in the sun like a jewel."30 Indeed this choice of the precise word and feeling for color show up throughout his novels. In C. Lady Dallington appeared:

She was very simply dressed in black, relieved by one flashing slash of yellow satin, somewhere near her waist and was wearing a bunch of yellow daffodils; but her clothes seemed to grow on her, and had an undefinable stamp of elegance and neatness about them.31

It is interesting to note with what apparent carelessness that "slash of yellow satin" is appended, yet it is needed to complete the costume.

From the preceding premises we have ascertained that Baring was a connoisseur with regard to every external aspect of woman's make-up. If that were his only contribution, it would be a notable one; however, his women characters are more than "skin deep." Baring permits us to study also their interior selves. Ronald Knox remarks on the marvelous insight into the feminine mind that Baring provided in his

29R. Knox, in Laura Lovat, op. cit., p. 111.

30M. Baring, The Puppet Show of Memory, p. 402.

31M. Baring, C., p. 154.
fanciful "Dead Letters," which appeared in Unreliable History. By saying in the conclusion that they are "almost better" than the novels in that respect, he little guessed what high praise that was for the novels themselves.

With a minimum of words, Baring contrived to present an extremely graphic sketch of individual personality traits. His personal letters abound in examples. Here is his reaction to Countess Benckendorff, wife of the Russian minister, who was stationed at Copenhagen simultaneously with Baring. "Her very charm, her sovereign quality is that she is brutally frank without being brutal." Need we register surprise that one of his acquaintances said of him, "He would just catch a glimpse of someone and say at once what that man or woman was"? That same art he employed throughout the novels. With consummate skill he telescoped a minor character from The Lonely Lady of Dulwich. Sylvia Luke was looking at the window display of jewelry in a second hand shop. She turned to her father, saying, "They're false." Baring commented, "In those two words she managed to instil the maximum of contempt with


34 Letter of M. Baring to E. Smyth in E. Smyth, Maurice Baring, p. 16.


36 M. Baring, The Lonely Lady of Dulwich, p. 140.
the minimum of refinement."37 Nowhere else in the novel did Sylvia appear, yet the reader feels he would recognize her kind anywhere. It is unmistakable. In another terse sentence we are permitted a glance at Mrs. Macbride who was listening to her talented daughter at the piano. "Her mother sat looking like a sibyl, dark, handsome and inscrutable. She said nothing."38 Once more Baring's ready pen conveyed the right effect by the use of very few words, skillfully selected.

In the same manner Baring indicated personality traits common to several heroines from the various novels. The fact that these traits recur does not mean to imply that Baring "typed" his women, but rather, that he considered such traits as peculiarly feminine and for this reason has assimilated them into his portrayals.

One such characteristic always considered peculiar to women is the proverbial "woman's intuition." In Baring's novels the women were able to penetrate even the most hidden glances. Princess Julia, mother-in-law of Blanche, is probably the best one to illustrate this point. Instinctively she recognized which of Blanche's men acquaintances would cause trouble and which would be absolutely harmless as far as Blanche's affections were concerned.39 Such penetration terrorized Blanche, for she never understood how it was possible. Baring succeeded in making

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37 Ibid.
39 M. Baring, Cat's Cradle, pp. 42, 142.
it extremely convincing, however. Two other characters in the same novel matched Princess Julia's sharpness. They were Blanche's Russian friends, the Olenev sisters. They sensed every catastrophe in Blanche's life without being told.\textsuperscript{40} Hyacinth Wake, on first meeting Fanny Choyce, said to herself, "That is the girl Michael will marry,"\textsuperscript{41} even though, at the time, Fanny and Michael did not know each other. Shortly after, Hyacinth's uncanny precognition became a reality. Intuition is so much a part of all these women that when it is missing in one of them, an observant critic comments on its absence.\textsuperscript{42}

Closely related to and possibly a result of the intuitive trait is the strange phenomenon that the women were enigmas to the men of the novels. Frequently the men seemed completely baffled by the course of action the women followed. Michael's reaction to Fanny was typical: "He thought her delightful and incomprehensible; he did not attempt to understand her . . . . Was she perhaps a sphinx without a secret?"\textsuperscript{43}

We may safely assume that Baring employed this device to disclose the intricacy of the feminine mind.

In concluding this short survey of typical characteristics, we may not omit a fairly universal one, namely, an indescribable sadness,
which seemed to encompass the feminine characters. Both Daphne Adeane\textsuperscript{44} and Madame D'Alberg,\textsuperscript{45} to mention but two, were victims of this state. Madame D'Alberg's sadness was apparent in her face: "It was a young face, and the sadness in it seemed inappropriate and ill-allotted, an unfair, unmerited load."\textsuperscript{46} Undoubtedly Baring's knowledge of the human heart was responsible for his highlighting this feature. Conscious of the fickleness of human affections and of the vicissitudes to which human love is subject, he sought to manifest it in the personalities he created.

There are several means Baring utilized to help the reader ferret out for himself the intrinsic qualities of the major women characters. Much can be learned about them by analyzing their careers, cultural interests, reading tastes, and hobbies.

It is fitting that the only "career woman" included by Baring was an actress. His fascination for the theatre can be traced to his early childhood. His enthusiasm for Sarah Bernhardt and Eleanora Duse was so great that it is said that he would go half way across Europe to see them act.\textsuperscript{47} They, in all probability, were the inspiration for his well-drawn fictional actress, Anais Dorzan.\textsuperscript{48} She seemed to be a composite of them both. Following is Baring's description of Anais Dorzan:

\begin{itemize}
    \item \textsuperscript{44}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 148.
    \item \textsuperscript{45}\textsc{M. Baring, The Coat Without Seam}, p. 229.
    \item \textsuperscript{46}\textit{loc. cit.}
    \item \textsuperscript{47}\textit{L. Lovat, op. cit.}, p. 13.
    \item \textsuperscript{48}\textsc{M. Baring, Darby and Joan}, pp. 74-76.
\end{itemize}
Anaïs Dorzan was not a tragedian; unlike Rachel, she left classic parts alone, as well as the romantic poetic drama whose heroines Sara Bernhardt was soon to interpret so divinely. Her poetry was the prose of life, and in her hands it turned to fire.

... She could act beauty, great beauty. Her eyes were wide apart, round and sad. When she was angry you saw no white — they were all black, like, people said, the eyes of the devil.

She made you laugh or cry as she pleased. She intoxicated an audience, and could excite it to a frenzy of passion and sorrow or to an ecstasy of delight. She made the passion — the suppressed passion — the stifled pride, ring so true. She expressed in it all the thwarted and baffled desire of all unhappy lovers, quietly, simply, and rapidly.49

There appears to be a marked similarity between Dorzan’s art and that of Eleanora Duse, if the following passage is compared with the one above:

Her art was like that of a cunning violinist; the music with its delicately interwoven themes was phrased in subtle progress and with divine economy of effect, till she reached the catastrophe, and then Duse attained to that height where all style disappears, and only the perfection of art, in which all artifice is concealed, remains.50

And although Dorzan portrayed entirely different roles from those of Sarah Bernhardt, they had one gift in common, the ability to capture and captivate an audience, literally "to carry it away."

49 M. Baring, Darby and Joan, pp. 74-76.

It is impossible ... to define the peculiar thrill that has convulsed an audience when Sarah rose to an inspired height of passion. When the spark fell in these Heaven-sent moments, she seemed to be carried away, and to carry us with her in a whirlwind from a crumbling world.

When as Cleopatra she approached Antony, saying: "Je suis la reine d'Égypte," the fate of empires, the dominion of the world, the lordship of Rome, could have no chance in the balance against five silver words and a smile, and we thought the world would be well lost; and we envied Antony his ruin and his doom. 51

In addition to dramatic ability, Baring endowed his subjects with other artistic accomplishments. Esther Macbride 52 was a talented pianist, and whenever she appeared in the novel, one was immediately aware of her artistic sensitivity. It did not matter whether she was conversing or dancing, her entire personality was influenced by her musical ability. At the piano, of course, she was in her element, as the following observation by her admirer, Christopher Trevenen, will illustrate:

He was amazed at the uprightness of her carriage, the sweep and mastery of her hands, her absence of self-consciousness and the expression in her eyes. She was rapt in what she was doing. She seemed to sink her personality in the music; to efface herself and to present you humbly with the composer's message. Christopher thought she looked like a priestess performing a holy sacrificial rite. 53

51 Ibid., p. 236.
52 M. Baring, The Coat Without Seam.
53 Ibid., p. 140.
One can judge from this that Esther was neither an idle dreamer nor a mere dilettante. Her love for music reflected a soul deeply sensitive to all real beauty. We have already mentioned Daphne Adeane's skill in decorating the chapel in her home. As with everything that she did, it showed "a delicate touch. You could tell at once whether she was playing the harp or the harpsichord, or the piano; it was the same when she painted or planted flowers."\(^54\)

In order to match his intelligent and well-read men characters, Baring had to provide women littérateurs. In the novels the men who met Joan Brendon\(^55\) and Beatrice Lord\(^56\) were convinced that they had read everything there was to be read. Blanche Roccapalumba's library, the author himself admitted, was characteristic. In addition to the *Imitation* and the poems of Herrick, it included novels based on amatory adventures.\(^57\)

Quaint was the reading taste of Daphne Adeane and Fanny Choyce. They preferred fairy tales. Each of them had something of the child in her, and that accounts for their choice. This shows how careful Baring was to be consistent.

But Baring did not always restrict himself to delicately artistic pursuits. Practical occupations had their place also. Zita Harmer took

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\(^{54}\)M. Baring, *Daphne Adeane*, p. 150.

\(^{55}\)M. Baring, *Darby and Joan*, p. 6.

\(^{56}\)M. Baring, *C.*

\(^{57}\)M. Baring, *Cat's Cradle*, pp. 529-530.
joy in her garden. "It was an unpretentious garden, and yet there was something special about it; something rare and intensely beautiful." Rose Mary Troumestreh efficiently managed a chicken farm, while Baring's most efficient character seemed able to handle anything from a household to writing books.

Mrs. Trevenen . . . managed the household; supervised the cooking; kept accounts; said her rosary every day; and yet she had time to read the modern French and English books and reviews that came out and to study Italian and Gaelic. She had written and published a life of Saint Francis of Assisi, which was well reviewed in the newspapers, as well as a guide to the churches in northern France.60

As a fitting conclusion for this discussion of the external manifestations which pertain to the feminine characters of Baring's novels, we will briefly consider the social group of which they were a part. They grew from an environment which was Baring's own. He had spent many years as a diplomat and, consequently, was at home in distinguished circles. Charles du Bos considers this fact to be a contributorto their convincing characterization.61 Vernon Lee (pseudonym Viola Paget) however, objects to Baring's restriction of characters to

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58 M. Baring, The Lonely Lady of Dulwich, p. 149.
59 M. Baring, Cat's Cradle, p. 492.
one social class. On one occasion she wrote: "Of course I dislike your people personally. I dislike their footling uselessness and devouring passion (they have time for it, as they never do anything but go to parties) ..."\textsuperscript{62} Baring replied in a humorous vein. He reminded Miss Lee that she herself attended many parties. He gave statistics concerning the number of parties Robert Browning and Henry James had attended. Finally he cleverly commented that most critics of his partygoers were not against parties as parties, but against "parties in the Mayfair."\textsuperscript{63} And he had presented his reasons for choosing the "Mayfair" class in a previous letter.

... I think that the existence of merely frivolous people who are bent on amusement is a necessary element in this grey world, and that Helen of Troy, Mary Stuart, Ninon de l'Enclos, Diane de Poitiers, Petronius Arbiter, and Charles II are equally necessary in the scheme of things as St. Paul, Thomas Aquinas, Marcus Aurelius, John Knox, Pym and Lady Jane Grey, whom we appreciate all the more by reason of contrast.

... Do not misunderstand me or think I am either blind to what is hollow and sham in "social" (hateful word) life, or to what is great and noble in the lives of those who renounce it and all its works. All I say is that tolerance is necessary on both sides; the frivolous have qualities and the strenuous and sober have faults which should suffice to prevent them from continually seeking for the motes in the eyes of others.\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{62}Letter of Vernon Lee to M. Baring quoted in E. Smyth, Maurice Baring, p. 331. /Italics not in the original./

\textsuperscript{63}Letter of M. Baring to V. Lee quoted in Ibid., pp. 332-333.

\textsuperscript{64}Letter of M. Baring to V. Lee in L. Lovat, op. cit., pp. 45-47.
Baring realized that human nature is universal, regardless of social position. For his purpose, namely, to show the failure of earthly goods to satisfy the human heart, *les classes aisées* were the best possible choice.

Travel was common to these people and contributed to a continental flavor in their personalities. The women, particularly, adapted themselves to an itinerary so extensive as to allow for the summer in Russia, Christmas in London, and thence to Rome for the remainder of the winter. For this reason even the native-born Englishwomen seemed to have a cosmopolitan rather than a national air about them. This is due, perhaps, to Baring's own utter lack of a nationalistic spirit. Even as a small boy his devotion to his French governess prevented his admitting that the French had ever been defeated by the English. Later his years spent as a student in Hildesheim, as a correspondent in Russia, and as a legate in Denmark furthered this catholic spirit. That calls to mind an anecdote of Father C. C. Martindale's. When the Vicar Apostolic of Salisbury, South Africa, was to be consecrated, Father Martindale was delegated to welcome guests from all parts of the world. His comment, after getting so many individual reactions to events and personages, was: "It might have been a novel by Maurice Baring."  

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65 M. Baring, *The Puppet Show of Memory*, p. 10.

Regarding the feminine characters of the novels, we now understand the almost complete absence of a distinctly "English" woman. An example will clarify this. At a theatre party in Russia, some English people were observing Madame D'Alberg. "I think she is a foreigner," was one comment; whereas, in reality, Madame was as English as her critics. In a similar incident occurred. Two English women were upholding the right of the Italians to improve their own cities without interference from tourists. In the course of their conversation they were told by an Italian woman, "Ah! you are Italian -- more Italian than any of us." Hating all petty barriers that would separate nations, Baring probably gave his women characters this international tone purposely, for when one reads his novels, one is conscious only that they are women, not that they are English, Russian, or Italian.

From the above study, it is evident that Baring employed every external device to elucidate his feminine characters. Each woman lives for us, because her beauty and personality are so strikingly drawn. The fact that they are limited by reason of their social position and ancestry does not detract from the universality of their appeal, for Baring was ever mindful that he was portraying women.

CONCLUSION

Baring succeeded in conveying to the discerning reader a startling illumination of woman by an unusually artistic understanding of the

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68 M. Baring, C., p. 407.
feminine mind. Woman was almost universally portrayed as making an oblation of self to repair for the past. She was not presented as a paragon of virtue but as striving to control her inordinate passions. Her ultimate renunciation of self was the result of an awakening to supernatural realities. When we consider the corpus of Baring's literary output and his attitude towards grace, the implication that divine grace was the cause of each woman's renunciation seems clear. The judgments of Baring's critics, notably Father Dwyer and François Mauriac, coincide with this interpretation. In the instance of the major women who were Catholics, a gradual conviction of the real meaning of their faith enabled them to renounce a sinful attachment. Blanche Roccapalumba overcame her despicable jealousy of Rose Mary and begged God's forgiveness for the selfishness of her life. Daphne Adeane so completely sublimated her love for Francis Greene that he was not even aware that it existed. Hyacinth Wake did similarly. Prompted by remorse of conscience, she severed all connections with Michael Choyce. Dorzan, the famous actress, found her true self, not on the stage, but in the three vows of religion. For Zita Harmer, also, solitude afforded time for contemplation on eternity and for sorrow over the past.

With those women who had no religion, not an overt conversion to the Church, but an acceptance of the Catholic doctrine of renunciation and self-sacrifice led them to full womanhood. Fanny Choyce, motivated by a sudden realization of Christ's supreme sacrifice for her, gave up Francis Greene and resolved to restore her husband's broken confidence.
Joan Brendon heroically refused the two men she loved for the sake of the other women involved. All these instances are proof that the characterization of the women in Baring's novels flows from a sound Christian philosophy of life.

In our consideration of the effect of the minor women upon the men from the novels C. and The Coat Without Seam we found that the mothers of both C. and Christopher Trevenen were sadly lacking as mothers. Lady Hengrave and Mrs. Trevenen were deficient in that sympathy and womanly understanding so necessary for dealing with youth. They were too engrossed in their social obligations and cultural pursuits to care about their sons. Disappointed in their mothers, both C. and Christopher Trevenen were likewise thwarted in their romances. C. became so entangled in Mrs. Bucknell's meshes that the good wrought by Beatrice Lord was seriously threatened. In Christopher's case, his devotedness to Madame D'Alberg might have led to his destruction had not the latter foreseen that possibility and been noble enough to withdraw from his life.

With regard to the delineation of personality characteristics and external beauty we saw that Baring was a master. Concise and exact were his portrayals of personalities. The idea of woman as an enigma to the masculine mind recurred in several novels. The well-known woman's intuition also received due attention. Although Baring has been accused of being biased in consistently preferring characters from the upper social stratum, his women have a universality which defies all distinctions of class.
Baring's partiality for descriptions of eyes has been noted. Details of dress too he has skillfully handled. Unusual was the manner in which he paradoxically defined an indefinable beauty which was possessed by almost each of the major women. Insignificant as all these aspects may seem in comparison with such major issues as the spiritual struggles and the supernatural development of the characters, they were considered because they too have their place in a Christian philosophy of life.

Our main purpose was to show how the feminine characters of Baring's novels could be properly evaluated only when they were viewed in the light of the Catholic teaching of sacrifice. Maurice Baring consciously aimed at having his feminine characters give witness to the glorious truth that spiritual peace is the fruit of resignation to the Divine will and renunciation of self. His subtle exposition was admirably suited to this sublime theme.
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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Sister M. Raymond Kornely, O.S.F. has been read and approved by three members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

[Signature]

January 23, 1950
Date

[Signature of Adviser]