



The Shadow Puppet

Georges Simenon , Ros Schwartz (translator)

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A new translation of this gripping domestic tragedy, set in Simenon's very own neighbourhood. Book twelve in the new Penguin Maigret series.

One by one the lighted windows went dark. The silhouette of the dead man could still be seen through the frosted glass like a Chinese shadow puppet. A taxi pulled up. It wasn't the public prosecutor yet. A young woman crossed the courtyard with hurried steps, leaving a whiff of perfume in her wake. Summoned to the dimly-lit Place des Vosges one night, where he sees shadowy figures at apartment windows, Maigret uncovers a tragic story of desperate lives, unhappy families, addiction and a terrible, fatal greed.

The Shadow Puppet Details

Date : Published October 2nd 2014 by Penguin Classics (first published 1932)

ISBN : 9780141394183

Author : Georges Simenon , Ros Schwartz (translator)

Format : Paperback 160 pages

Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Crime, Cultural, France

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From Reader Review The Shadow Puppet for online ebook

Richard says

This is a typical Maigret story. The Chief Inspector has not clear idea and allows the case to unfold before him through patient well structured questioning. It is through understanding people rather than forensic clues. As usual the more notorious less cultured characters appear in the best light; Maigret likes the victim for how he treats others and the most scorn is shown to the more privileged classes. However a crime has been committed and the policeman will not rest until the truth is exposed.

These books are able to be read in an evening and the stories are always a pleasure to read and reason over the motive and culprit.

Debbie Robson says

Lately I've learnt quite a lot from reading crime fiction of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. Holly Roth has taught me a lot about psychological depth and the pacing of a storyline in particular - progression. Progression of a storyline is a very important thing for the reader. If the story is not progressing the reader will quickly lose interest. I recently abandoned a book after 100 pages. I scanned through another 100 pages and even from such a brief look I could see that the storyline was not progressing. It was a mystery and similar conversations with the same outcome were simply being rehashed in different locations. What new twists had appeared? What clue had surfaced? From my scanning it appeared not enough to warrant 100 pages of text.

Flip through "Maigret Mystified" and you will see that, although not that much in the way of action happens, the storyline is moving along nicely. M Couchet has been shot dead in an armchair in the office of his pharmaceutical firm adjoining a block of flats in the quiet Place des Vosges. It is nearly midnight and three hundred thousand francs are missing.

Without delay Maigret begins interviewing people. From here progression is quickly in place. "As he examined the house, the Inspector noticed another light, a cream-coloured curtain and behind it a woman's silhouette."

"When he left home at eight o'clock next morning Maigret had three alternative tasks to choose from, all of which had to be performed that day..."

"Well, so you've found your glove!" And Maigret scrutinized the hands of the official from Wills and Probate, who turned so pale that the Inspector thought for one moment that he was going to faint. His lips were trembling. He tried in vain to speak."

Actually, as you can see from the above, you can't scan such a book. You end up very quickly reading it. I was also impressed by the details and vividness in the writing. I was frankly disappointed with the first Simenon that I read "Maigret and the Madwoman" and only gave it two stars. I notice though there has been mention of his different writing periods and I believe that as the latter book was written in 1970 that it wasn't of the quality of Maigret Mystified. I believe his middle period of work inspired by his visit to New York is very highly thought of. I will have to hunt down his early titles and his New York books so watch out for more Simenon reviews. Highly recommended.

Richard Brand says

My son gave me the first Simenon book when I went on a tour of France. He said that Simenon was one of the first great french mystery writers. And I just continue to read them. I guess it is that thing about once having started a series, I have the obsession to read the whole series. It must be that because I do not find that I am very much impressed with Maigret as a detective. His solutions to the crimes are always in his head and the read does not know what is going on. (At least, I never know what is going on) Then suddenly Maigret has all these things take place which he is supposed to have arranged but the read does not have clue about any of it.

This story a struggling man discovers a process for some serum and makes a lot of money. He had a wife when he was poor, but she like to marry stability of a government official. When the struggling man made his fortune and married a second woman, the first woman resented the heck out of missing out on the money. There is a son involved and the now rich man has a kind and gentle mistress as well. The safe gets robbed and the rich man gets shot and Maigret has to find out who did it.

There are passages that I am not sure I can believe that they could happen. There are crazy women in the apartment complex, there is an elite society resident with a new baby. There is a landlord who worries about the place.

For me the best part of most of these stories is that they are not very long.

Sharon Barrow Wilfong says

Another great Maigret.

A scientist is at his table pouring serums into vials. Someone shoots him and his body is found slumped over at the table. His laboratory is an a large apartment complex with a quadrant in the middle. The man's body is easily seen through the windows of the surrounding apartments.

Did anyone see anything? Why was this man killed? It turns out his ex-wife and current husband live in one of the apartments. What do they know?

Maigret puts together all the pieces.

Tyler Jones says

Fast-paced, even for Simenon. There are some unbelievable coincidences that would be unforgivable in other writers, but Simenon gets away with them because you, the reader, know that the plot really isn't the point. What exactly is the point? To immerse yourself in the setting; both Paris and the stratified layers of society. Like Maigret we walk the streets, chomp on our pipes, mutter under our breath; *he is a scoundrel, but he is an honest scoundrel!*, and duck into a bar for a beer.

Ivonne Rovira says

The building's officious concierge realizes that Monsieur Couchet is dead when she notices him behind his

lighted frosted window not having moved for a long time. The image of Courbet as a shadow puppet lingers with Chief Inspector Jules Maigret for the length of the novel, and he begins to think of the investigation as shadow puppets in a drama, and readers will, too.

Couchet has built a pharmaceutical empire, Doctor Rivière's Serums, and leaves a fortune. So who would want the affable, generous Couchet dead? His discontented, carping ex-wife, who left him just before he built his fortune? Her new husband, a dapper civil servant from the registry? The well-born second Madame Couchet? Couchet's considerate mistress? Or Couchet's drug-addled son from his first marriage? And are the 360,000 missing francs from the safe the motive for the crime? Or an additional and unrelated one?

Readers will find *The Shadow Puppet* another wonderful novel in this excellent series. And, as ever, the best way to enjoy Chief Inspector Maigret is with the Audible version, narrated by Gareth Armstrong.

Jim says

Georges Simenon's early Maigret mysteries are almost uniformly splendid. **Maigret Mystified**, originally **L'ombre chinoise**, was published in 1932, side by side with a number of other great titles.

The original French title means "Shadow play," and it was particularly appropriate considering the circumstances of the story. A murder takes place in a courtyard which contains apartments and a medical laboratory. Inspector Maigret concentrates his investigation on the residents of the courtyard, plus two or three others who knew the murdered M. Couchet intimately. It is a shadow play that doesn't take form until an event occurs that shakes the inspector from his lethargy, as he sees sudden marked changes in some of the suspects. From this point on, the plot unwinds as if it were on rails speeding downhill.

The characterizations in this novel are brilliant, especially of Mme. Martin, the ex-wife of the victim, who has remarried a petty official just before Couchet became a millionaire.

Simenon's Maigret novels is almost always worth reading. His are not tales of ratiocination. No, on the contrary, they are Gallic with a vengeance, as Maigret sees his role not so much as a detective who marshals his facts as a witness to a shadow play that suddenly becomes very real. Then he is there to pick up the pieces and, at times, execute justice on his own.

Laura says

Tout Simenon:

Raymond Couchet a été assassiné dans le bureau directorial, près du laboratoire de sa firme, au fond de la cour d'un immeuble situé place des Vosges. Une importante somme d'argent a été volée.

4* Pietr the Latvian (Maigret, #1)

3* The Carter of 'La Providence' (Maigret, #2)

3* The Late Monsieur Gallet (Maigret, #3)

4* The Hanged Man of Saint-Pholien (Maigret, #4)

3* A Man's Head (Maigret #5)
4* The Yellow Dog (Maigret #6)
4* The Night at the Crossroads (Maigret #7)
2* A Crime in Holland (Maigret #8)
3* The Grand Banks Café (Maigret, #9)
3* The Dancer at the Gai-Moulin (Maigret #10)
3* The Two-Penny Bar (Maigret, #11)
3* The Shadow Puppet (Inspector Maigret #12)
4* Lock No. 1 (Maigret, #18)
4* The Cellars of the Majestic (Maigret, #20)
3* Inspector Cadaver (Maigret, #25)
3* Maigret Se Fache (Maigret, #26)
4* Maigret's Holiday (Maigret, #28)
4* La première enquête de Maigret (Maigret, #30)
4* My Friend Maigret (Maigret #31)
4* Maigret at the Coroner's (Maigret #32)
3* The Friend of Madame Maigret (Maigret #34)
3* Maigret and the Burglar's Wife (Maigret, #38)
3* Maigret's Mistake (Maigret, #43)
3* Maigret and the Calame Report (Maigret, #46)
3* Maigret si diverte (Maigret, #50)
3* Maigret in Court (Maigret, #55)
3* Maigret and the Idle Burglar (Maigret, #57)
3* Maigret and the Bum (Maigret, #60)
4* Maigret Loses His Temper (Maigret, #61)
3* Maigret on the Defensive (Maigret, #63)
3* Maigret Bides His Time (Maigret #64)
3* Maigret Hesitates (Maigret, #68)
3* Maigret's Boyhood Friend (Maigret, #69)
3* Maigret and the Madwoman (Maigret, #72)
4* Maigret and the Loner (Maigret, #73)
TR The Saint-Fiacre Affair (Inspector Maigret #13)
TR The Flemish House (Maigret, #14)
TR The Misty Harbour (Maigret, #15)
TR The Madman of Bergerac (Inspector Maigret #16)
TR Liberty Bar (Maigret, #17)
TR Maigret (Maigret, #19)
TR The Judge's House (Maigret, #21)
TR Cécile is Dead (Maigret, #22)
TR Signed, Picpus (Maigret, #23)
TR Félicie (Maigret, #24)
TR Maigret à New York (Maigret, #27)
TR Il morto di Maigret (Maigret, #29)
TR Maigret et la Vieille Dame (Maigret, #33)
TR Le memorie di Maigret (Maigret #35)
TR Maigret in Montmartre (Maigret #36)
TR Maigret Rents a Room (Maigret #37)
TR Maigret and the Gangsters (Maigret #39)
TR Maigret's Revolver (Maigret #40)

TR Maigret and the Man on the Bench (Maigret #41)
TR Maigret Afraid (Maigret #42)
TR Maigret Goes to School (Maigret #44)
TR Maigret et la jeune morte (Maigret #45)
TR Maigret and the Headless Corpse (Maigret #47)
TR Maigret Sets a Trap (Maigret, #48)
TR Maigret's Failure (Maigret #49)

Gearóid says

Really good!
These books are small and quick reads but they
really are very entertaining and Simenon really
does makes you think sometimes with his insights into human nature.

John Frankham says

The twelfth Maigret novel. A good'un. A cast restricted to the 28 inhabitants of an apartment block where a man is found shot. Complex relationships between first and second families, wives, mistresses, concierge, etc. Maigret persists in this claustrophobic atmosphere, and there is a stunning twist! Wonderful.

FrancescoML says

Smetterò di leggere Simenon e i romanzi con Maigret quando ne incontrerò uno, non dico brutto (sarebbe una condizione impossibile), ma almeno un po' meno bello degli altri.
Purtroppo con "L'ombra cinese" non ci sono andato nemmeno vicino perché è uno dei migliori (vabbe' uno dei "un po' più belli") Maigret che abbia finora letto.
Un gioiellino perfetto con la solita umanità che, sotto lo sguardo sornione di Maigret, ruota intorno ad un delitto che, in questo caso, si consuma in un condominio: quasi un delitto della stanza chiusa.

Kartikey Shandilya says

3.5/5

Ghufran says

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Charles Dee Mitchell says

Maigret solves another squalid murder. The intertwined characters would be pitiable if only so many of them were not also morally corrupt, greedy, and spineless. There are two likable people. One is the victim and the other loses what little chance she had in life.

It was sad. So sad it almost made you want to give up on being a man, on living on this earth even though the sun shines over it for several hours a day and there are real birds flying freely!

Jim Coughenour says

Sometimes all you want is popcorn. I don't read Maigrets for the plots, I read them for the misery. *The Shadow Puppet* was first published in 1932 and is, as usual, comically bleak.

It was sad. So sad that it almost made you want to give up on being a man, on living on this earth, even though the sun shines over it for several hours a day and there are real birds flying freely!

Most of the characters are pathetic, grotesque. They seethe with petty resentment.

The old woman before him had a malevolent expression of jubilation and menace. She was talking! She was going to talk some more! Out of hatred for the Martins, for the dead man, for all the residents of the building, out of hatred for the whole of humanity! And out of hatred for Maigret.

No wonder they all murder each other.

I came to Maigret after reading Simenon's "hard novels" – of which his detective stories seem to be a parody. In the right mood, at the end of a long day of corporate mendacity, these are the perfect tonic.
