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In the early years of the century Somerset Maugham, the promising young writer, tired of London's literary parties "given by women of rank and fashion who thought it behooved them to patronise the arts." He was "in a rut."

He went to Paris. There the young author was taken to a restaurant called Le Chat Blanc, where he met Aleister Crowley, who at the time was dabbling in satanism, magic and the occult. And Mr. Maugham took Aleister Crowley as his model for Oliver Haddo, the malevolent genius of the black arts in "The Magician"—Mr. Maugham's novel of 1908, now republished.

But, writes Mr. Maugham in a fragment of autobiography introducing this re-issue, Oliver Haddo was by no means a portrait of Aleister Crowley. He was more sinister, more ruthless.

Mr. Maugham will make the readers of 1956 shudder with the horrors he wrote of in 1907 as he told the story of Haddo, the evil magician who brought a beautiful English girl artist into his power to be tortured and finally destroyed so that he could feed the monsters of his own creation by magical operations, on human blood.

After re-reading "The Magician before its present resurrection, Mr. Maugham thought this of his work as a young writer—"The style is lush and turgid, not at all the sort of style I approve of now, but perhaps not unsuited to the subject: and there are a great many more adverbs and adjectives than I should use today."