



The Misty Harbour

Georges Simenon , Linda Coverdale (Translation)

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A new translation of Georges Simenon's gripping tale of lost identity. Book sixteen in the new Penguin Maigret series.

A man picked up for wandering in obvious distress among the cars and buses on the Grands Boulevards. Questioned in French, he remains mute . . . A madman? In Maigret's office, he is searched. His suit is new, his underwear is new, his shoes are new. All identifying labels have been removed. No identification papers. No wallet. Five crisp thousand-franc bills have been slipped into one of his pockets.

A distressed man is found wandering the streets of Paris, with no memory of who he is or how he got there. The answers lead Maigret to a small harbour town, whose quiet citizens conceal a poisonous malice.

Penguin is publishing the entire series of Maigret novels in new translations. This novel has been published in a previous translation as *Death of a Harbour Master*.

'Compelling, remorseless, brilliant.' - John Gray

'One of the greatest writers of the twentieth century . . . Simenon was unequalled at making us look inside, though the ability was masked by his brilliance at absorbing us obsessively in his stories.' - *The Guardian*

'A supreme writer . . . unforgettable vividness.' - *The Independent*

The Misty Harbour Details

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From Reader Review The Misty Harbour for online ebook

Federica Cutolo says

Dopo aver letto "La camera Azzurra" mi sono fiondata su questo libro con entusiasmo e aspettative alle stelle. Andando avanti nella lettura, però, mi sono resa conto che l'entusiasmo iniziale calava sempre più...Non posso dire che sia un brutto libro, assolutamente, è scritto molto bene senza dubbio e la trama è intrigante a suo modo, forse anche più di quella della camera azzurra...Ma, sarà che non sono amante del genere investigativo/giallo (mea culpa), sarà che avevo troppe aspettative, non sono riuscita ad apprezzare questo romanzo come speravo... In ogni caso tengo a precisare che ho apprezzato maggiormente le ultime venti/trenta pagine, che hanno ridestato in me l'interesse che era un po' andato perduto nel corso della narrazione.

Ivonne Rovira says

A befuddled man — one who seemingly can't speak or understand speech (seven or eight spoken languages plus sign language are tried) — turns up in a fashionable section of Paris at the end of October. His clothes are new (and German), but all identifying labels have been cut off. No wallet, no identity papers, but with 5,000 francs in his pocket. Odd, no?

Five days later, a young woman identifies him as Captain Yves Joris, saying she is his maid/housekeeper. After retiring from the merchant navy after 30 years, Joris became the harbormaster at Ouistreham, a small port between Trouville and Cherbourg in Lower Normandy. She claims her employer disappeared on Sept. 16. So where has Joris been for six weeks? And how did a man with a two-month-old bullet wound to the skull, one who neither speaks nor comprehends, get by for those six weeks? And how did Joris, who only wore a uniform, end up in clothes from Hamburg? Further, Joris' wound was treated by expert surgery. Who tried to kill him? And who succeeded in saving his life? When the mysterious Joris dies a day after being returned to Ouistreham, Maigret faces one of his most confounding cases.

Most Maigret novels seduce their readers, and *The Misty Harbour* proves more intriguing than most. I've been on a bit of a Georges Simenon reading spree, and I believe this might be the best of the books thus far.

Rhys says

A more complicated than usual 'Maigret', although it's difficult if not impossible to work out who has committed the crime in any novels in the series. In this case the series of baffling events are even more remarkable than those Simenon often throws in the path of his famous Inspector. The atmosphere is superb, of course, and the pacing is almost relentless...

Carol says

Many years ago I read some of the Maigret Series by Georges Simenon. When in the library last week, I saw

some videos of some of the different stories/episodes with Michael Gambon (the guy who played Dumbledore in Harry Potter about 10 years earlier). I really like this Gambon vs. Harry Potter version.

In *The Misty Harbour*, Maigret is confronted by the case of a man who has no memory of who or where he is and who has recovered from an operation following a head wound. He doesn't appear to be a down-and-out and has five thousand francs in his pocket.

The mystery of his identity at least is solved when his maid, Julie, arrives in Maigret's office, having seen his picture in the newspapers. She says that his name is Yves Joris and that he is the harbourmaster at the small port of Ouistreham, having taken up this post after 30 years at sea.

Maigret decides to go there with Joris and Julie to establish whether any crime has been committed and to find out why he disappeared from the town on September 16 and turned up in Paris six weeks later. Initially, there appears to be no reason for his departure. Joris lives a quiet life, has no known enemies and is not involved in any passionate love affairs.

When Maigret arrives it is the season for mists and he finds it virtually impossible to make his way about the town. This climatic feature acts as a kind of metaphor for Maigret's efforts to discover what happened. Whilst the ordinary townsfolk are willing to welcome him into the local tavern, it seems that anybody connected with Joris, who might possibly be able to help the investigation, is saying absolutely nothing. However, the quality above all that Maigret possesses is a stubborn persistence and he eventually begins to make some progress, assisted by his devoted sergeant Lucas whom he has summoned from Paris.

When we do eventually discover what happened we find that once again a breakdown in human relations is to blame. As frequently with Simenon, ordinary human frailty leads to a wholly unnecessary tragedy and we find ourselves wondering whether it could not have been avoided.

This novel is quite remarkable in its sense of place and in the way it captures the nuances of everyday life in a small port. Of course, owing to its position and its canal connection with the mainland, Ouistreham was quite important at this time and the rather complex nature of its waterways is well brought out. To the lay reader it is not always easily comprehensible but the atmosphere within which the action takes place is never anything less than totally convincing.

For those readers coming to Simenon for the first time, there are better novels than this one but it is still an absorbing read.

I loved the later sections. In the prior novel, I thought it dropped a note that referenced what his next was going to be...and why he had to push the other case to a close. That was wrong...just a reference that he needed to get back to work, but not that it was getting onto the case in this next book.

One note on the edition that I read: It's actually a hardback edition from 1942 named *Maigret and M. Labbe* and contains *Death of a Harbor-Master* and *The Man from Everywhere*. That edition appears on GoodReads, but looks like it could be deleted. It's cool that this book includes the library card in the front pocket with stamps from 1959 - 1970 and includes stamps in the book: "Catalogued 1942" and "Oakland / OCT 1942 / Public Library." This book has been around the block a few times and lives on to tell the tale. I appreciated reading this specific book, as much as, I enjoyed reading the Maigret novel. (less)

Betsy says

One of the strongest in the series for me so far. Poor Maigret spends most of yet another case sodden, on the verge of being sick, and clambering around on tilting boats. The story line is unusual and the threads are woven into a satisfying pattern.

Andrew says

A pretty great Maigret. I loved the first 20 pages - as M. wanders around a pitch foggy dock almost being knocked into a lock and other barriers all the while having lots of people around him that he didn't even know were there! great, great atmosphere. Then the bar and the locals and the seaman who will never trust or talk to a landlubber. Features actual violence (rare) and a long slow waiting game with the mayor his wife a brute of a seaman and his sweet sister. To my tastes the long waiting game maybe went on a bit too long, but that is nit picking!

Gauss74 says

Ed ecco, alla fine ci sono arrivato pure io. E' davvero dall'inizio della mia esperienza anobiiana (finiti i bei tempi in cui questo social si trattava con piacere, e non con lo sforzo di capirci qualcosa) che praticamente l'universo tutto mi spingeva a leggere Simenon. E dire che ero refrattario all'idea. Per questa istintiva e motivata irritazione che provo nei confronti di tutto ciò che è francese, per il sospetto che mi nasce nei confronti del romanzo di genere, peggio ancora del romanzo di genere scritto prima della guerra mondiale. Avevano ragione loro. Perchè se Carlo Lucarelli giustamente afferma che anche un romanzo di genere può essere grande se il genere stesso non è lo scopo ma il mezzo per raccontare qualcos'altro, allora Simenon è grande letteratura. Tra le pagine di questo "il porto delle nebbie" si può sentire l'odore della salsedine misto a quello della nebbia, si può sentire sulla pelle il freddo umido del vento della manica alternato al piacevole caldo polveroso delle stufe, compaiono davanti ai nostri occhi gli uomini di mare, con la loro gentilezza rude ma anche con la loro insuperabile omertà.

Con la pipa del commissario Maigret in bocca possiamo fare un tentativo di intuire che cosa sia la Francia (o cosa sia stata, in tempi come questi): il che comunque non è poco.

Diciamo che Simenon lo salvo. Gli altri francesi possono andarsene tranquillamente ad imparare a farsi il bidet dopo aver cagato.

Myrna says

This is the first I have read of this English author, who has written more than 75 books. A mystery- the main character being Detective Maigret. A short fascinating story of a man being found in Paris w/a healed but severe head injury, and seemed to have lost his speech and unable to identify himself.

Hospitals send out news articles to surrounding countries to find out his identity & home country.

His maid in lower Normandy sees the news and comes to identify him. His sudden disappearance was a mystery & he had been gone for many months. Maigret accompanies him and his maid back to find that he was the harbormaster, Capt. Joris, in the small town. Having been back in his home for only a day he dies of

poisoning. At this point Maigret attempts to find who murdered him and why. He befriends the harbour people and others in the town to gather clues.

Detective Maigret is an interesting individual and of course, does solve the crime after a few adventures of his own.

Kenneth says

A man is discovered in Paris who is amnesiac and with a scar on his head indicating a prior gunshot wound. He is identified by his house maid and Inspector Maigret accompanies him back to the harbor town where he resides. He was the retired harbormaster of the little fishing village. But then in a day or so, he dies suddenly of strychnine poisoning. WHY???!!! Maigret sets out to investigate but the people who would know something are reluctant to tell him anything. And so it goes from there.

John Frankham says

A good Maigret, one of a number where Simenon shows his love and knowledge of the closed communities in river, canal and sea locations. In this case a tidal port, from where ships go to England and the Baltic, where the harbour-master disappears, presumed drowned, then reappears elsewhere, unable to speak, with a well-healed bullet wound in the head. Maigret takes him and his housekeeper back to the harbour to investigate. But nobody will speak up - at first, until Maigret wheedles confidences and provokes actions

trovateOrtensia says

Il miglior Maigret che ho letto sinora.

Richard says

A typical Maigret case where the truth always comes out through his dogged perserverance. What marks this case out is the victim is incapacitated and unable to explain what happened to him. Following a subsequent murder no-one seems to want to speak the truth nor answer Maigret's questions.

It is a complex story as it is a profound mystery which seems unfathomable before and after the murder.

I loved the setting and more of Simenon's observations of Ouistreham's fishing community which he works into this novel.

Initially when he arrives Maigret cannot see his hand in front of his own face due to the mist shrouding the harbour and its community. Thereafter it stands a metaphor of the investigation that Maigret cannot see through and the fog that masks his understanding and hampers any breakthrough.

A good read and an insight in to pre-war France if you can see through the haze.

Padmin says

E' uno dei più bei romanzi di Simenon, lo posso confermare a distanza di anni dalla prima lettura. Perché s'incontra ovviamente il delitto, ma anche molto altro, molto altro. La perdita della memoria, la cocciuta reticenza dei personaggi ("ma perché nessuno parla?"), l'adulterio e quindi la gelosia... Infine la suggestione delle maree normanne e la nebbia -vera protagonista del libro- che tutto avvolge. Anche il lettore.

Tony Fitzpatrick says

There are for each of these books alternative titles. For this one it is "Death of the Harbour master" which is not very imaginative and kind of spoils the plot. In this story, Maigret is almost caught out by a conspiracy of silence amongst the key players - and having exceeded his authority is seriously worried and frustrated by the situation. Of course he manages to solve it all, although he benefits from some extraordinary luck. The plot is fairly simple - harbour master of small port near Caen is found wandering confused in Paris. Maigret takes him and housekeeper home, following which the harbour master is found dead. The local (somewhat pompous) Mayor, the sea going brother of the housekeeper, and a long forgotten cousin of the mayor are all mixed up. The local fisherman and harbour workers in Ouistreham are well described, as is the weather, especially the fog. Maigret's failings and doubts here are well written but could be developed much further, as I hope they will be in future books. Simenon is getting much better at writing these - and they are becoming much more readable and compelling as the series moves on.

Sandra says

Il titolo del libro esprime appieno ciò in cui si dibatte il lettore nel corso della lettura del romanzo: una nebbia fitta che avvolge i personaggi, i luoghi, gli indizi del delitto. Si arriva all'ultimo capitolo senza che il mistero sia stato almeno un poco dipanato, sono le ultime pagine a diradare le brumose atmosfere e a chiarire finalmente la morte del capitano Joris, trovato vagabondo per le strade di Parigi senza documenti, non in grado di parlare e con una profonda ferita alla testa curata in qualche modo, alla fine identificato grazie alla sua domestica Julie, e riaccompagnato dal commissario Maigret nella sua casa a Ouistreham, dove, il mattino successivo, viene trovato morto avvelenato da stricnina.

Come sempre la grandezza di Simenon sta nella ambientazione dei gialli, nella cornice in cui inserisce gli eventi. In questo episodio magistrale è la descrizione degli abitanti del borgo marinaro di Ouistreham, pescatori e lavoratori portuali, gente abituata a lavorare in silenzio nelle solitarie banchine portuali, che si ritrova alla Buvette de la Marine, il caffè in riva al mare, in cui ci si ripara dall'umidità avvolgente del clima esterno riscaldandosi con un "cicchetto", la cui vita si svolge nel cupo ed inquietante clima la cui protagonista principale, come dice il titolo, è la nebbia che tutto avvolge e ricopre. Maigret si cala completamente nelle abitudini di vita della popolazione, così come nell'atmosfera che -dice Simenon- "non si può definire sinistra, è un'altra cosa, una vaga inquietudine, un'angoscia, un'oppressione, la sensazione di un mondo sconosciuto al quale si è estranei, e che continua a vivere di vita propria intorno a voi". Fino al finale che, inaspettatamente, seppur drammatico, lascia aperto uno spiraglio di sole nelle vite di qualcuno che tanto ha sofferto in passato.
