

Novel Club Minutes  
December 7 meeting

The Novel Club conducted the 3rd meeting of the year following the combination zoom/in person format. The in-person contingent met at the lovely Cleveland Heights home of Linda Sandhaus and Roland Philip. Members enjoyed the Marchant Manor cheese as well as cookies and wine so much that we were a bit late to begin the Zoom portion of the meeting. By 7:45 we were up and running, with fourteen in attendance in person, and around twelve on Zoom.

Jennie Kaffen opened the meeting by noting the sad passing of long time Novel Club member Leon Gabinet, who died in hospice on Monday. May he rest in peace.

Art and Diane Stupay generously offered to host our January 4 meeting at their home. We will also need volunteers to write the biography and likely the critical paper for this book, as Leon Gabinet and Louise Mooney are scheduled to do it at this point.

Peter Haas gave an update on the website. We need to renew our domain name, and he will do that. The cost is around eighteen dollars. We need to select a new host, as our current site is cumbersome and difficult to update. We paid \$ 400 for a three year contract last year and there are 2 more years on that contract, but a new host will be less costly and easier to maintain than the one we have now. We aim to have a new site by the time of our next annual meeting.

So began the discussion of "Of Human Bondage", by Somerset Maugham, published in 1915 but still relevant today. Jennie Kaffen read the biography written by Toby Siegal, as Toby and Jay were not able to attend in person. Jim Schilling filled in for Jay as critical paper writer and discussion followed.

The in person discussion was lively and we discussed the broader themes of the books such as man's searching for freedom, and what freedom means. We also discussed the role of faith in the book, and how the main character's educational journey fit into the context of his time and place in society. He says he loses his faith, yet leads a good generous life and he looks down on religious authorities. This is clearly a criticism of the church as an institution. He also becomes free from the bondage of trying to fit into upper class society through his friendships and, at the end, his marriage.

All present participated in the discussion until we retired for more refreshments at around 9:15.