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Galsworthy's presentation of Irene in The Forsyte Saga, and her importance

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Thesis

GALSWORTHY'S PRESENTATION OF IRENE
IN THE FORSYTE SAGA,
AND HER IMPORTANCE

by

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I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze John Galsworthy's methods of creating and developing the character Irene in the first novel of The Forsyte Saga, and also to consider the influence of that character throughout the rest of the Saga.

Method:

I. Biographical Note

II. Review of Galsworthy's Methods of Character Creation, with References to the Presentation of Irene

III. Theme of The Man of Property

IV. Analysis of the Methods and Result of the Portrayal of Irene in The Man of Property

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IX. Findings about the Influence of Irene as Revealed in Each of the Parts of the Saga
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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

John Galsworthy's father sent him on various expeditions to foreign lands for the purpose of investigating the affairs of certain industries in which he, the senior Galsworthy, had interests. The boy had been educated at Harrow and Oxford, and now after reading law and traveling for a year or so, would, his father thought, soon become a prosperous London barrister.

However, during his travels young Galsworthy came to a realization of how "beastly dull (it would be) to go on grinding at a profession or business just to make money."¹ Then, too, came the desire to write. To a friend he wrote:

I do wish I had the gift of writing; I really think that it is the nicest way of making money going, only, it isn't really the writing so much as the thoughts that one wants; and, when you feel like a very shallow pond with no nice cool deep pools with queer and pleasant things at the bottom, what's the good?²

In another letter to the same friend he expressed a belief in self-development, but questioned the source

²Ibid., p. 97.
of energy needed to keep up the process.

Soon after, that source of energy was provided for him by the inspiration of the friendship and love of Ada Galsworthy. After the words, "Why don't you write? You're just the person," were uttered by Ada, creative industry and energy were never lacking in Galsworthy.

Ada Galsworthy had been married to Arthur Galsworthy, John's cousin, in 1891. Of this marriage, Marrot writes that it was a "tragic mistake" and that Ada was blameless and helpless.¹ He adds that Ada and John Galsworthy became lovers in 1895, and continued so secretly for nine years until after the death of Galsworthy's father in 1904. At this time came the long deferred divorce case which would have greatly shocked that Victorian old gentleman.

Mabel Galsworthy Reynolds' account is even more brief, and she does not allude to the secret relationship of her brother and Ada before their legal marriage, after the death of her father.

More information about Ada Cooper and the circumstances of her marriage to Arthur Galsworthy may be revealed in the future. Probably then biographers will

compare the love of Ada and John Galsworthy with the
passion of Irene and Bosinney in the first novel of the
_Saga_ and with the later, more peaceful love of Irene and
"young" Jolyon in the following novels and tales of the
_Saga_. Then, too, Arthur Galsworthy's character may be
revealed and he may be identified as the prototype of the
man of property, Soames. In the novel, _The Man of Property_,
the theme is of a loveless marriage in which the husband,
Soames, will not give up his rights to his wife because
of the "sanctity" of the marriage bond which decrees that
his wife is his property.

This wife, Irene, has many of the rare qualities of
Ada Galsworthy. Along with being the spirit of love and
beauty, Irene is Ada with her soft dark eyes, fair skin,
love of music and flowers and all other beauty.

This same theme of the unhappy marriage is evident
in most of Galsworthy's novels and many of his plays, for
the divorce law in England, which granted divorce only
when a charge of adultery was made, was one of the social
wrongs against which Galsworthy revolted.

The wide lasting strength of the sympathy aroused in
Galsworthy by Ada's plight is expressed succinctly in
his letter to Sir Hall Caine who had written an article
on the Divorce Commission.
There will assuredly be no end to tribulation on this subject nor any decency in the law until that law recognizes the dissolution (under proper safeguards of time) of marriages which are for one reason or another unhappy, without requiring guilt on the part of either man or woman.

Also, in a letter to William Archer, Galsworthy expresses the wish that that gentleman had been on the Divorce Law Commission because

.....it would have been a great pull to have had one spirit sitting there who could see that the orthodox sacramental view of marriage is based on nothing whatever but insistence on your pound of flesh, and is the apotheosis of unspirituality.

About 1896 Galsworthy determined to give up law and write. The reactions of his parents are typically Forsyte and mid-Victorian. His mother thought it would be "nicer" for John to be a barrister and shrank from the idea of her son as a "famous author." His father thought it much more solid to be a lawyer than a writer. However, these protests were ineffectual in stemming the flood tide of ambition and creative spirit liberated by Ada's inspiration.


2 Ibid., p. 703.

3 Ibid., p. 109.
CHARACTER CREATION

Of the conception of characters in fiction Galsworthy said that the "germ-point of creation" was the union of a cell which was the author's observation of a real person, with a cell which was the author's mood at the time of observation.\(^1\) When the germ is developed in the author's mind, the result is soon expressed. He explained this process of expression by using another figure. He said that the lava of experience in the creator's subconscious mind bubbles up through the holes in the crust that is his conscious mind. The creative genius of the author, Galsworthy said, depended upon the frequency of these perforations in the crust, and the ability which he had to shape the spurring lava into real characters.\(^2\)

At the very first, Galsworthy molded this lava as was suggested to him by the human prototype of the character he wanted to create. However, he avoided a production "sedulously drawn from life", so that as the character developed, it "diverged more and more from the original."\(^3\)

\(^1\) John Galsworthy, *The Creation of Character in Literature*, p. 16.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 3.
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 184.
Yet, by cleverly spaced repetition he emphasized throughout the history of a character those particular human traits with which it was first imbued. To use his own words, he "selected certain salient human traits and continually reinforced them."

The resulting characters are human because they live and move and have their being in very real English homes and because their inner lives are motivated by great universal powers. In short, they are at once generic and specific. As gradually and naturally as they live, the novels evolve.

Monsieur Chevrillon, a friend and critic of the author, wrote of Galsworthy's genius of character creation:

His characters are born of a large number of ideas and accumulative observations; they gradually detach themselves from him; henceforth, he has only to watch them living, and the details of their lives are so linked together by the logic of nature that their every word, act, passing expression, postulate and recall their past, their surroundings, habits and temperament—-and beyond these, the more general and soul stirring truths, the psychology of passion, sex, and type, the hidden depths of man and of life.1

Galsworthy said:

In those few character creations which endure is a quality which can beat, perhaps, be described as homespun yet vital. They are vivid from ever

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1. A. Chevrillon, Three Studies in English Literature, p. 189.
revealing themselves without seeming to.\textsuperscript{1}

He endowed his own vivid characters with that elusive power.

Most characters he depicted subjectively. They think and talk of one another so that there is a closely woven use of the direct and indirect methods of portrayal which results in revelation of the character who serves as a medium and of the person to whom he is reacting. This method is difficult to use artistically even when the character which serves as the medium has some mental abnormality which makes his viewpoint well-defined in its scope and interpretative power. The method as Galsworthy used it for many character media who are all possessed of normal minds, and often minds of the same type, becomes what would for most writers be a hopeless tangle of technical intricacy.

The greatest pitfall beneath this tangle is the use of a viewpoint which attracts attention to itself rather than to the story.\textsuperscript{2} It might result in a situation similar to that caused when some character on the stage or screen "steal the show." At any rate it would cause

\textsuperscript{1} John Galsworthy, \textit{The Creation of Character in Literature}, p. 3

\textsuperscript{2} Clayton Hamilton, \textit{Materials and Methods of Fiction,} p. 134.
a change of emphasis, distorting the desired effect.

For most writers the Gordian knot in the tangle, would be in shifting gracefully from one character medium to another, which Galsworthy does so easily that the reader is conscious of no inartistic jolt. Another difficulty would be proportioning the speeches or thought of characters and the subjects to whom they are reacting, so as not to create a monotonous effect.

Galsworthy, however, is a master of the technique. He always attains the desired emphasis; gracefully he slides the reader in and out of the minds of his characters to suffice for the interest of the scene at hand. His successful use of the method is probably due chiefly to a most delicate and most effectual style device—portraying characters by the use of indirect speech, the characters, as it were, talking mentally to themselves. Thus they fulfil his requirement of enduring characters, and are self revealing.

His subjectively presented characters, like well directed actors, never slip out of their roles however difficult they may be to maintain. Their mental reactions are always completely in character with what little the author has written of them in direct description; with what he has suggested by realistic detail of environment; and with what the reader has deduced from the light cast
by the comments on the other characters.

To mention the author in connection with the direct description, conveys the impression that the reader is conscious of him. This is not true. As Chevrillon wrote, "No great English novelist of our times has shown so little of himself in his books." He achieves with utmost grace one of the aims which is considered desirable in the fictitious work of a writer, "to obliterate himself as much as possible from the reader's mind."

As has been indicated, in conjunction with the combination of direct and indirect methods of character portrayal, Galsworthy uses setting as a medium for revealing character. Under setting may be included the minute details about a house as in the picture of Robin Hill; about a room like Fleur's copper-floored reception room; or about a chair such as the one in which old and young Jolyon both died. Setting also includes description, moods and details of nature, as in "Indian Summer of a Forsyte." This use of realism and the moods of nature to reveal character, tempts one to say that Galsworthy belonged at the same time to the school of Emile Zola and to that of Thomas Hardy. However, his realism was highly selective and he didn’t believe in Nature with a capital "N". Also, he who despised the classifying of artistic creations within forced and artificial bounds.
should not be so pigeon-holed.

As another means of character portrayal Galsworthy often leaves much unsaid. The silences of his characters are eloquent. Conversely he sometimes has his characters say everything. As Monsieur Chevrillon states, "All that Mr. Galsworthy does not tell us is implied in what he tells us." Detailed conversation and silences such as those during Soames' dinner for June and Bosinney give as effective a phonographic reproduction as his recording of details of setting is sometime photographic. Both create foreground through which flashes of the real beauty of ugliness of a scene or the real feelings of people may be sensed.

One cannot help being creative when reading Galsworthy, for he is an author who has the subtle power of thoughts and imagination of his readers.

Monsieur Chevrillon maintains that the idea always governing Galsworthy's art is "that the inner life of a man is seen only in flashes." His method of doing this is to "call forth the reader's imagination, inciting him to fill in the gaps—in short to convey to him the hidden life of the character."  

1 A. Chevrillon, Three Studies in English Literature, p. 194.
2 Ibid., p. 194.
So far this consideration of Galsworthy's methods of character creation and portrayal has been of subjectively presented characters, who in turn may present one another in an objective manner. There are, however, certain characters who are presented entirely from the objective point of view. One is Bosinney, Irene's lover, in The Man of Property. Incidentally, Galsworthy believed that he failed in depicting that character. However, he seems very adequate, in his role of merely serving as a disturbing influence on the Forsytes and as a means of changing the life of Soames and Irene.

Remoteness, mystery and passiveness are qualities in the character Irene which make subjective presentation impossible. Despite their secret belief that beauty is inevitably linked with immorality, the Forsytes admire Soames' wife and serve as lively commentators, sometimes mildly sympathetic, often piqued, and always curious.

Irene's beauty is discussed or thought about by all the Forsytes, from Swithin, the gay old duffer who fancies himself a dandy and a man of charm and taste, to young Jolyon, the artist who is a reactionary from Forsytism.

To isolate what they say or think of her and present the information here is almost to break down a poem and divest it of beauty. For in this way one is conscious
that what is said of Irene, is mostly repetitious—always a reiteration of her beauty, her grace, her helplessness, and her power to inspire love and understanding. It is the continual reinforcement of "certain salient human traits", which is part of Galsworthy's method.

However, when the introduction and reinforcement of the characteristics of this charming creature issue from the minds of many different characters, all of whom the reader feels are really living, the result is inexpressibly vital and effective.

In direct presentation, Galsworthy keeps Irene's conversation limited and interspersed with silences, for she does not speak the language of the Forsytes. If she does not have a reply to make, we know her thoughts. By her physical shrinking, her silences, the bowing of her beautiful head, the flashes of expression in her soft eyes, her few low-spoken words, she despises the Forsytes and recoils from what they are saying.

Frequently the author presents Irene's beauty in harmony with her background. For Irene he seems to avoid recording "infinitesimal phenomena" which form an excellent lifelike foreground for many of his characters. Her background like herself is of vague spiritual and sensuous beauty.
Galsworthy is too reserved to ever revel in anything, but he must have had a quiet delight in portraying much that he loved when he created Irene and her atmosphere. He loved the sunlight, and he often pictures her with it gleaming through the window draping on her golden hair, or flickering down through the foliage onto her creamy skin and the violet or gray of her soft gown.

He loved gardens, trees and flowers. He has Irene swaying along the paths of gardens and over the smooth lawns. He pictures her sitting with old Jolyon or her husband, young Jolyon, under the old oak at Robin Hill, or sitting alone with her memories in the coppice. He shows her struggling with sadness and desperation as she sits near the azaleas in the little court of Sosses' house.

Galsworthy loved music. He delights in portraying Irene playing the piano and swaying gently to the strains of his favorite composers, Chopin and Bach.

The atmosphere created for Irene is always of beauty, which the author worshiped. This beauty is of light, sound, imagery, scent, and touch, and is fired with great mystic power. It is like the love-inspiring power in Irene, which causes her great suffering and great happiness in life.
Her plight in the first novel of the *Sage*, and many of her trials, can be identified with the life and personality of the author's wife, Ada Galsworthy. Galsworthy's description of his wife whom he adored would apply to Irene as well. He wrote to Edward Garnett:

I think of her (Ada) sometimes as a piece of rare silk, with a bloom on it as delicate as that on grapes, but which you can't rub off, and spun of filaments, each of which shines, but so subtly and so permanently blended that they can never come apart in colour or form. She is rare, but she is not rare with that obvious kind of rareness which jumps to the eye, and which consists in a person having certain qualities too strongly, and being called original. Her rareness is __far more rare__—it is the rareness of the *fine fleur*, the perfect blend, no extreme in it, no violence. She has the grace and savour of the Cortina peasant woman together with something in Reynolds' Countess of Albemarle (National Gallery); both qualities are old. She goes back to Nature in being as it were the last word of civilization. She is complex but you cannot see the complexity because it is so beautifully put together. She is nymphlike in her soul; and as you know, Nymphs have an elusive permanence.¹

Galsworthy has Soames say of Irene, "She would never die."

Irene "diverges from the original" and becomes an embodiment of love and beauty. Yet she is never purely allegorical because she is at the same time a living, developing character who is first helpless, then struggling, and finally freed from the possessiveness and insensitivity of Forsytism. Her role is defined in this

comment on The Men of Property:

To make the idea of possessiveness concrete it must be shown in action. Hence Soames Forsyte's wife, Irene, is made the embodiment of disturbing beauty, of all the elusive joy which money can neither buy nor hold. The futility of possessiveness is shown in Soames's failure to hold Irene although he uses every resource which the possessive instinct can use.¹

¹ R. P. Boas, The Study and Appreciation of Literature, p. 103.
IV

THE MAN OF PROPERTY

It is a spring afternoon in 1886, and the Forsytes have gathered at the London home of old Jolyon to celebrate the engagement of his granddaughter, June Forsyte, to a young architect, Philip Bosinney.

Old Jolyon, a tea merchant, and his twin brother James, a solicitor, are eighty years of age. Old Jolyon is a handsome, rather philosophical and cultured gentleman. He is not pure "Forsyte" in the sense in which Galsworthy so often uses the name to denote all upper middle class English people whose possessive instincts are dominant.

Three more brothers—Swithin, Nicholas, and Roger—all men of property, are present. Timothy, the youngest brother (in his late sixties) rarely leaves the seclusion of his home on Bayswater Road, and is the only Forsyte missing. However, he will hear all about the party from his three old sisters, Aunts Ann, Hester, and Juley. They live with him and furnish the family with so much gossip that the house is known as "Forsyte 'Change."

Present, also, is a beautiful woman whose grace and charm attract the attention of all the Forsytes. One of
them once described her as a "heathen goddess," for there is a strange, shadowy aloofness about her.

Young Bosinney asks June who she is, and June introduces the beautiful woman as Irene, her "greatest chum." Soames, son of James, who has been watching his wife, Irene, comes along and asks that he too be introduced to Bosinney.

Meanwhile, James talks to Aunt Ann, the oldest member of the clan. He hints at a danger which all the Forsytes present seem to sense—an undermining force about to attack the solid materialism for which Forsytes stand. June, they feel, cannot marry Bosinney for he has no money. They wonder at old Jolyon's sanctioning such an engagement. Not only is Bosinney penniless, but he is also a non-conformist who wears a disreputable-looking soft hat, moves like a leopard, rumples his hair, and always looks as though he has a secret joke.

Another pending danger is sensed by some of the old Forsytes. Irene, they understand, has been asking for a separate room. It has been about three years since she finally consented to marry Soames. She was Irene Meron, daughter of a poor professor who died leaving her in the home of a stepmother who wanted to be rid of her. The Forsytes are comforted by the knowledge that she has no money, so doubtless Soames can keep the upper hand.
Aunt Ann is sad, thinking of young Jolyon, June's father, who no longer comes to the family gatherings because he left June's mother and ran off with a foreign girl. She is soothed by the appearance of Soames, her favorite, the one to whom she can trust the "family soul" that must soon slip out of her keeping.

Soames, the solicitor, also the curator of Forsyte stocks, bonds, wills, and general welfare, was dubbed the "man of property" by his uncle, old Jolyon. Old Jolyon, not being a pure "Forsyte" has an impersonal and humorous twist of mind. No thoroughbred Forsyte could think so objectively of "dear Soames", for he is one of them, and after all, his desire for property is not remarkable since it is the backbone of life itself. No, they would never have given Soames that name, but they use it, for Jolyon is "so droll" and the name is so befitting Soames' solidarity and prestige.

At this moment there is a sneer on Soames' smooth, yellowish face; he is scornful of this "Buccaneer" Bosinney. His feeling passes throughout the Forsyte ranks. Aunt Ann looks at him, and he listens carefully for he knows that she is going to speak, which she rarely does. She quavers that she thinks Bosinney is not the right husband for dear June. Soames, examining a fine china bowl, replies, "She'll tame him."
The beauty and mystery of Irene and the idealism and freedom of Bosinney are foreign elements which are disconcerting to the Forsyte bulwark of property, family, and conventions.

The plot evolves from the effect of this beauty and freedom on materialism. Soames, son of Mammon, seeks to capture Irene or Beauty. He suffers because he cannot understand his defeat. His pride and sense of justice are hurt because Irene's aversion for him is an infringement on his rights as a property owner.

Soames hires Bosinney to build him a country home at Rovin Hill, when he hopes to entice and cage Irene. Ironically, during the conferences regarding the construction of the house, Bosinney and Irene fall in love. The plot is somewhat further complicated by the observations of all the Forsytes, the struggle of June to again get Bosinney's attention, and the lawsuit which Soames brings against Bosinney because the latter, in building a house of classic beauty, has exceeded the specified amount of money for the construction of Robin Hill. Soames makes life unbearable for Irene; and Bosinney, either realizing how hopeless the situation is purposely steps in front of a car, or else blinded by anger and fog is accidentally killed in the London streets. Irene, crushed by grief, returns to Soames' London house. Forsytism has killed
freedom and idealism, and maimed beauty.

Possession of the soul of Irene, or eternal beauty and love, was the mad desire of Soames. Blindly his property instincts groped like great clumsy tentacles to encircle her elusive spirit and hold it captive.

Irene's return is no triumph for Soames. She is like a broken bird that has returned to her cage. The strange expression in her eyes—that expression of something she never showed Soames—is gone, gone with Bosinney. What he wants is not there; only crushed beauty is before him, and he hates it, for he is blind to its distress. He can only reproach it for escaping him. "He longs to cry: 'Take your hated body that I love out of my house!'"\(^1\)

In turn he longs to divorce her and forget her; to let her go because she has suffered enough; to make a slave of her and keep her in his power. He cannot forget that whatever he does will involve sacrifice. He can do nothing; it is all "too close around him, an unbreakable cage." He who wanted to capture beauty and love is held captive by his own blindness—his lack of understanding and sympathy.

Beauty has shaken the walls of Forsytism, as the sob which bursts from Soames shakes him from head to foot.

V

ANALYSIS OF THE CHARACTER PORTRAYAL
OF IRENE IN THE MAN OF PROPERTY

Despite the aforementioned danger of destroying
the poetry of Irene by analysis of method of her creation,
the method of presenting her through the minds and
utterances of other characters will be demonstrated.
Other less important methods of indirect and direct
portrayal of Irene, and the story itself, will be con-
sidered insofar as they are related to the first and
most important method—the indirect presentation of one
character from the objective view of other characters.

Irene is selected for this analysis of method be-
because she is the heroine of the Forsyte Saga and "the
heroine of a novelist always represents Woman to that
novelist."¹ The method of presenting Irene through
the minds of others, is chosen because it is the method
which Galsworthy uses the most often and the most ef-
f ectively. The first novel in the Saga is elected for
the purpose of demonstrating the use of this method be-
cause it is the one in which Irene is created and

¹ H. V. Marrot, Critique of W. L. George in Life and
Letters of John Galsworthy, p. 466.
presented in the most detail.

For convenience the important mental and verbal reactions of each of the characters, serving as media for Irene, are grouped together, which to a regrettable degree, reduces their effectiveness.

Irene is first seen at the party to which old Jolyon has invited the Forsytes in celebration of the engagement of his granddaughter, June, to Philip Bosinney. Soames, separated for the moment from his wife's side, is following her about with his glances in which there are strange expressions of watchfulness and longing. ¹

It is through the observation of these covetous eyes and unhappy, convention-restricted mind that Irene will be first considered.

Soames watches her as she talks to young Bosinney at a dinner given by Swithin, and he thinks he hears her say in a low voice, "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here!" ²

Three days later as he walks away from his house leaving his wife sitting sad and motionless, he broods about the deep, mysterious aversion which she has for him. It irritates him, and he is too much Forsyte to

² Ibid., p. 41.
imagine the cause, that "she had made a mistake and did not love him, had tried to love him and could not love him." He has forgotten his courtship and the expression on her face—"strange, passive, appealing—when suddenly one day she had yielded and said she would marry him."  

Here, and in Cry of Peacock, Galsworthy describes Soames' persistency in his courtship of Irene Heron.  

The girl hated her step-mother who was urging her to marry Soames. She was young, without friends and money. Finally, fearful and sad she consented to marry him on condition that he would set her free should she so desire—a condition which, once married, Soames disregarded.  

Instead of having these reminiscences which the author sketches, Soames the man of action, plans hiring Bosinney to build a country house for him at Robin Hill. This, he thinks, will keep Irene away from her friend, June Forsyte who, sensing the estrangement between Irene and him, might put dangerous ideas into Irene's head.  

In his subsequent conference with Bosinney, Soames

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2 Ibid., p. 48.  
3 John Galsworthy, On Forsyte 's Change, pp. 181-186.  
remarks that June has a temper and the architect replies, "A temper's not a bad thing in an angel."

Soames makes no reply, for he is thinking that he never called Irene an angel. He could not so have violated his best instincts, "letting other people into the secret of her value, and giving himself away."  

At dinner that night, he watches her with the rosy light reflecting on her golden hair and evening dress. Of all the paintings, houses, and investments that he has collected, she is the loveliest, yet he gets "no secret and intimate feeling out of her." He broods about her silence and her strange expression. Finally, during a jerky conversation broken by her silences of emotion and his catlike watchfulness, he tells her of his plan for a house at Robin Hill. She shows no enthusiasm, and soon leaves to be alone in the courtyard. Later Soames watches her sitting there in the beautiful summer evening, and can sense a struggle which goes on within her.

Soames and Bosinney discuss plans for the house—

1 John Galsworthy, The Man of Property, p. 53.
2 Ibid., pp. 58-59.
3 Ibid., p. 59.
the former in terms of money, the latter in an ironical manner, of a house "worthy of a gentleman." Soames is watching his wife as she serves their tea. After Bosinney's departure he talks of him; Irene smiles and says little. 

One fine spring day Soames is reminded of a similar day when Irene yielded to this plea that she marry him. In memory he relives his courtship as he walks homeward. Again his thoughts dwell on Irene's aversion for him. Arriving home, he finds Bosinney who is waiting to see him about the Robin Hill house.

It is at a dance at Roger Forsyte's that Soames first becomes aware that Irene and Bosinney are in love. He sees June and her grandfather enter the ballroom, then leave quickly. As if his eyes are directed by them, he sees his wife and Bosinney who are dancing together. Soon they pass near him. He catches the scent of her flowers, sees her eyes, her parted lips, and a "look on his face that he does not know." 

Soames tries to pretend that there is nothing in what he knows is true. He refuses to give Irene her liberty which she asks for, pleading that their marriage is not

2 Ibid., pp. 99-100.
3 Ibid., p. 169.
a success and reminding him of his promise of release.

Later there is an altercation between Soames and Bosinney about the financial arrangements for Robin Hill. Irene accuses Soames of being mean, and in anger he asks if she is "carrying on a flirtation with Bosinney." After her negative reply and silence, Soames is overwhelmed by anger. The unfathomable expression of her face, and her eternal silence fill him with a desire to beat her.

That night Irene locks the door of her room. For a Forsyte husband this is the supreme injustice, the optimum insult to the vital point of his pride—his sense of property. Bitterly he thinks of Irene and Bosinney. He is sure that so far there has been nothing between them, but if there were he would not admit it even to himself. His only comfort is his knowledge that they are both beggars.

The next day he stands by a window listening to the music of an organ grinder—it is the same waltz to which Irene and Bosinney were dancing that night at Roger's. As he looks out he sees Irene approaching.

This description of Irene is an example of Galsworthy's clever interweaving of several methods of character delineation. One is the expression of Soames' mental observation

\[1 \text{John Galsworthy, The Man of Property, p. 215.}\]
of his wife's flushed cheeks, her smile, her joyful movements, her quick breathing, the scent of her perfume and the new, soft rose-colored blouse she is wearing. Breaking into this picture in the mind of Soames and dispelling any impression of sympathy on his part, are his laconic remarks. Such description through conversation is a type of direct method. "Very pretty," is his comment as he hears her half laugh, half sob as she gazes at her reflection in the hall mirror. Then as he bars her way up the stairs, he snaps, "Why such a hurry?"

As a transition from the direct to the indirect method the author has Soames attracted by a curl of Irene's hair which has fallen loose. Then with, "He hardly recognized her--she seemed on fire,"--the observation has shuttled back into the mind of Soames. He sees Irene putting the curl in place. "Perfume seemed to come from her hair and from her body, like perfume from an opening flower."¹ This is given in direct description, yet so gracefully is it inserted that the reader is not conscious of another change from Soames' impressions to the author's.

The reader is told what has taken place, by that strange smile of Irene's and by the changes in her as they are noted by Soames. It is assumed, however, that Soames

the unimaginative, is not enlightened regarding the change in relationship between Irene and Bosinney. The idea is conveyed, also, by the method of leaving much unsaid. The author does not describe the love affair directly, because "the words of love are eternal, and we know them beforehand." 1 This power of subtle suggestion keeps the reader's imagination active and is one of the reasons for Galsworthy's novels being satisfying reading.

After a little more tense conversation, Irene flies upstairs. Soames asks himself what prevents him from following her. The author, without making one conscious of his intrusion, asks if it be that Soames sees Bosinney looking out after the vanishing figure of Irene—by this flight of imagination which Soames might have had, we are seeing the unhappy lover. 2 We are led to think that Soames does not share this flight of imagination and that he does not understand the suffering of Bosinney because his will to keep Irene curbs his imagination and keeps him from "too much knowledge" 3 which he dreads.

This scene with its beauty of description, its restraint, its depth of implication, is the result of the weaving of the direct and indirect methods of character portrayal.

1 A. Chevrillon, Three Studies in English Literature, p. 294.
3 Ibid., p. 219.
There is direct description of Irene, and direct recording of the short conversation of Irene and Soames which is also an indirect method in that it reveals their effect upon each other. Also, there is the objective portrayal of Irene through the mind of Soames by means of indirect speech or thought expression. Combined with this last method is the subjective presentation of Soames, or the insight which the reader gets into his character while he is learning what Soames thinks of Irene.

With these types of direct and indirect methods of character delineation, the method of implication in something said, of something left unsaid about a character is also used.

Employed in the last of this same scene is the hyper-delicate process of describing character and events by means of speculation as to what someone might have seen in imagination had he been possessed of that power.¹

The scene marks a change in Irene, who although passive, is from now on a somewhat developing character because of the "influence of circumstances....(and)..... of the wills of other people."² Soames notes her increasing self-possession, in the inscrutability of her coun-

² Clayton Hamilton, Materials and Methods of Fiction, p. 80.
nance and the advent of a new expression which "he had never been used to see there." ¹ Because he has never had the power to love and arouse that look himself; because he is so blind, so wanting to be loved yet so insensitive, one sympathizes with Soames. It is as Galsworthy intended.²

Frustration of the Man of Property and sympathy with Irene and Bosinney were what the author wanted to create. Yet this was not to be achieved without giving Soames some wistful, appealing qualities of wistfulness and helplessness.

Soames is a puppet of Mammon and the god of English conventionalism. He is a possessive, determined, energetic, self-satisfied, unthinking puppet. He is humanized and made vulnerable by his yearning to be loved, first by Irene and later by Fleur, his daughter by a second marriage.

One October evening, instinct prompts him to spy on lovers in the park, and he suffers a Forsyte revulsion from the passion lurking there beneath the great dark trees. He resents it because it is something not to be displayed and talked about, and because of it his wife may be sitting there in some secluded spot "like a common wench."³

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Then one foggy morning in late November, Soames looks back on the time when "he asserted his rights." It is this "act of property" which is the changing force in the lives of Irene and Soames and therefore, the climax of the story.

Soames, still aware of his wife's aversion for him, believes that he has upheld the "sanctity of marriage" and taken the first step toward reconciliation. That evening, however, he is somewhat disconcerted to find that Irene has been out. He waits for her in the hall, but when she comes she slips silently past him like a ghost.

It is then that Galsworthy makes a most obvious and graceless shift in mental approach. He writes: "It is now to George Forsyte that the mind must turn for light on the events of that fog engulfed afternoon." Through the mind and imagination of "the only Forsyte sportsman" are viewed the meeting of Irene and Rosinney and the tragic result.

Meanwhile Soames has been to Timothy's, and with his

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1 John Galsworthy, The Man of Property, p. 245.
2 Ibid., p. 246.
3 Ibid., p. 249.
4 Ibid., p. 249.
will strengthened by the mid-Victorian atmosphere, and the flame of his jealousy fanned by the gossip, he resolves "to put an end to that sort of thing once and for all; for he would not have her drag his name in the dirt! If she could not or would not love him, as was her duty and his right--she should not play him tricks with anyone else!"¹

When he arrives home he finds that Irene has left him, and it is typical of him that he is tortured most of all by the knowledge that Irene and Bosinney can live for some time on her jewels.

He goes to tell his mother and father of his misery, and upon returning, looks through Irene's possessions, where he finds her jewels resting in their case, and a note addressed to him, saying that she has taken nothing which was given to her by him or his people. Her loathing for him is thus best revealed to him in terms of property. He "betrays the Forsyte in him" and gives way to emotion-- "selfless and unpractical."²

The mood is not a lasting one, and when Irene returns after the death of Bosinney, which was probably suicide, Soames is cruelly unsympathetic and cold.

The Forsyte men are much of one mind. It seems

² Ibid., p. 272.
logical, therefore, to consider their reactions to Irene next in order to those of that same of Forsytism—her husband Soames.

There is his father, James Forsyte, who has lived seventy-five years, during which time his greatest joy has been saving money for his children. His attitude toward Emily, his wife, is that of one who has completely forgotten what it was to be in love.\(^1\) He receives her tender attentions as the expected fulfillment of wifely duties.

He is much upset when he learns on "Forsyte 'Change" that Irene and Soames are having marital difficulties. He looks upon Irene as not dependable, and believes she will be getting ideas from that far too independent young woman—June Forsyte.\(^2\) It is with relief that he realizes that Irene will not be able to assert any independence because she has no money.

Soon after, he is invited to dine with Soames and Irene. He is impressed by her "value"—the beauty of her gown, her real lace, the contrast of her with his own daughters. Then he catches himself mentally, and in true Forsyte spirit blurts out that "she (is) spending a pretty penny on dress."\(^3\)

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2 Ibid., p. 44.
3 Ibid., p. 68.
In spite of his Forsyte qualms, he enjoys the dinner. Basking in her presence he senses that he is being praised and comforted and that his food and wine are agreeing with him. After dinner, he sits alone with Irene. "She" he reflects is "really quite a taking little thing; she listened to you, and seemed to understand what you were saying." As he is talking he examines her beauty from her bronze-coloured shoes to the waved gold of her hair. Again his pleasant thoughts are broken by a Forsyte mental quirk, and he is fearfully aware of "something strange and foreign" in her. Whereupon, he becomes cautious and warns her not to see too much of June. He continues to ward off his fear of Irene by giving her advice; finally, he leaves very much upset.

In this scene Irene has been revealed by James' mental observations of her beauty, by the comforting effect of her beauty on him, by the frightening effect of her strangeness, and by her own rigidity of manner when he speaks of her duty to Soames.

This reaction of Irene is again evident when, during a drive to Robin Hill, James reproaches her for not being more affectionate to Soames. Her reply is a blush and the words, "I can't show what I haven't got." At her apparent distress, he softens a little--then threatens
that Soames will not long put up with such conditions.  

Like Soames, he observes that when Irene is with Bosinney her face has a new expression. So he hurries her away from Robin Hill with the certainty in his mind that she and the architect have been planning a rendezvous.  

Prior to this drive with James to Robin Hill, Irene is driven there by his twin brother Swithin. He fancies himself an Epicurean and is proud of the sobriquet "four-in-hand Forsyte" which was given him in his youth by someone who was really mocking him.

One is already aware of his appreciation of Irene, for when she came to his dinner party, it is said, "His hand enclosed Irene's, and his eyes swelled. He thought she was a pretty woman—a little too pale, but her figure, her eyes, her teeth! Too good for that chap Soames!" Then Swithin became impatient because June and Bosinney were late. It was then that Irene uttered the first words in the course of the story. "People in love are always late," she said, which was a simple comment yet in contrast to Forsyte speeches which would shame those who uttered them if they were expressions of such an outlandish thing as love.

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With this introduction to Swithin, the reader is prepared for some delightful comments on Irene during the account of this drive. This account is given by Swithin to the old folks at Timothy's. One is not disappointed, for Swithin proves to be an interesting commentator partly because he is under the ridiculous illusion that Irene's unusual animation was due to her admiration of him and his equipage; partly because of the demand of the curious mid-Victorian aunts, Hester and Juley, for graphic details; but mostly because he repeats a very significant remark made by Irene. What she said was occasioned by Swithin's horses running away during the drive home. She said: "I don't care if I never get home!" 1

During this dramatic tale the reader is taken into Swithin's consciousness from time to time, so that he learns more than what was told the aunts. Also, the reader is carried with the spirit of Swithin in a flight of imagination to the coppice where Bosinney and Irene confess their love. The spirit says:

"Love! Hah!"

Swithin awakes and it seems unbelievable that he knows nothing of what his spirit saw, for he is a tired old man who has been dreaming of a new soup! 2

1 John Galsworthy, The Man of Property, p. 121.
2 Ibid., p. 118.
Swithin discloses to the aunts that he wouldn't "wonder a bit if that architect chap were sweet upon Mrs. Soames!" Then as if to assure them of his sophistication, he adds, "I don't wonder at it—she's a very charming woman, and, I should say, the pink of discretion."¹ Despite his bravado about pretty women having their fling, Swithin is a Forsyte and really believes that Irene has too much good sense to carry things far.

More like James than Swithin are the two brothers, Nicholas and Roger. They reveal Irene's character only once, as they talk together on their way home from old Holyon's party for June. They comment on the fact that Soames and Irene "don't get on." Roger remarks upon Irene's beauty, and Nicholas' rejoinder is: 'She'd no money.' Secretly he congratulated himself on having married a rich girl before the Married Women's Property Act. (Mr. Galsworthy later champions the cause of this unfortunate lady by having her, after many years of married life, become quite independent and regain her money from the reluctant Nicholas.)² They continue discussing the impecuniosities of the Herons, agree that Irene will cause trouble for Soames, and then go their

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² John Galsworthy, On Forsyte 'Change, pp. 71-83.
separate ways homeward.

Old Jolyon Forsyte, who is eighty, is unlike his brothers because of his philosophical nature, his love of beauty, his chivalry and tolerance.

In The Man of Property, Galsworthy makes old Jolyon's reactions to Irene such that they can bloom into that strange, beauty-inspired emotion which is so delicate and lovely in "Indian Summer of a Forsyte."

Despite his love and support of the unhappy June, he is non-Forsyte enough to appreciate Irene's beauty. What he says of her reveals his loyalty to June, and his struggle between the Forsyte and non-Forsyte points of view. Also, it confirms the idea of Irene's disturbing quality which had so frightened James. What he thought of her was that "she was not a flirt, not even a coquette," words dear to the heart of his generation, which loved to define things by good, broad, inadequate words—"but she was dangerous," and just why he didn't know. With his usual subtlety of style, Galsworthy projects a thought foreign to Jolyon into these observations of Irene's nature. Tell him of a quality innate in some women—a seductive power beyond their own control! He would answer: "Humbug! She was dangerous, and that was the end of it."¹

As old Jolyon's character develops, it becomes evident that although as a Forsyte he would never have said that about the seductive quality of some women, yet as a "half-breed Forsyte" he really had understanding and sympathy for others.

When old Jolyon hears of Bosinney's death he has sympathy for Irene as well as June. He send his son to Soames', saying, "She's brought it on herself I suppose; but somehow I can't bear to think of her shut up there—and all alone."

The nature of his father provides a reason for young Jolyon being, except in name, a pure, non-Forsyte, and like Bosinney, a reactionary from unthinking conformity to religion, morals, and the sense of property.

Young Jolyon is an artist, and at the beginning of the story, an outcast because of his separation from his first wife. Although he is father of the deserted June, it is not strange that his is the most sympathetic view of Irene. He has been in a similar position as an "unhallowed lover." He is sensitive, beauty-loving, and like his father, deeply chivalrous by nature.

During the story he sees Irene only twice. Galsworthy wisely arranges to have this character who is rich in subtle-

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ty of mind report on two important, emotional scenes.

Young Jolyon first sees Irene as a beautiful stranger sitting in the Botanical Gardens where he is painting. He notes her delicate face, large dark eyes, soft lips, and "a look on her face which reminded him of his wife." He believes she has "come into contact with forces too strong for her." He feels sorry for her and wonders who she is.

Young Jolyon is the kind of character who may reasonably be allowed to comment on the effect of beauty on other people. Galsworthy has him feel irritated as he observes the long admiring glances of two young gentlemen, an old professor, and a gardener who pass by.

He has Jolyon enumerate the various kinds of beauty which Irene's is not. As an artist he then describes her face, expressing beautifully what each of the others has said within the limitations of his role.

In shape and colouring, in its soft, persuasive passivity, its sensuous purity, this woman's face reminded him of Titian's Heavenly Love.... and her attraction seemed to be in this soft passivity in the feeling she gave that to pressure she must yield.

Young Jolyon is able to define that expression which

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2 Ibid., pp. 234-235.
was and unknown to Soames. He sees the eagerness of a woman in love; then he sees Bosinney striding toward her. A glance at their faces convinces him that this is no fleeting passion, "This was the real thing!" Were that expression in one of Galsworthy's popular plays it would probably be cut from the stage version. A modern audience would certainly mock young Jolyon's instant observation that "this was the real thing." However, Galsworthy, like Browning, was a great lover and was from the first certain of the sincerity of his love, which fact may excuse his allowing young Jolyon to know so quickly the value of that which is so illusive.

Young Jolyon can imagine that Irene is protesting against being a drag on Bosinney. He senses that she is passive and that probably she would never run away with her lover. He knows women and he knows what most people would be thinking of this one, "she is concerned about the sin of deceiving her husband!" He exclaims to himself, "Little they know of women! She's eating her heart out, after starvation, taking her revenge!" and he adds, "Heaven help her—for he'll (Soames) take his."¹

The second time young Jolyon sees Irene is after the death of Bosinney, when his father sends him to Soames' house. He glimpses her standing in the hall with a wild,

eager expression in her eyes, then she turns to stone and Soames slams the door in his face. 1

It is in the next novel of the Forsyte Saga that Irene tells Jolyon that for a moment she had thought he was Phil Bosinney. This foreshadows Irene's turning her affections to Jolyon many years later.

June Forsyte reveals the character of Irene, not serving as a visualizing medium, but by providing contrast. Therefore, she is to be considered in her own right as a character in The Man of Property. She can hardly be called a minor character, for in this story and the subsequent Forsyte novels her defense of people in difficulty and her outspoken directness often are very important in plot motivation.

June is the daughter of young Jolyon who has been brought up by her adoring grandfather, old Jolyon. She is imperious, small, very erect and crowned with an abundance of bright red hair. Her blue eyes flash with determination and not infrequently with temper. She is impulsive, tender-hearted, and very enthusiastic about her favorite activity—caring for "lame ducks."

Her rival, Irene, has just what June lacks—great beauty, charming reserve, tact, passivity, graciousness,

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and the power to inspire love.

June's virtue is never rewarded and her life is not a happy one, yet this does not arouse sympathy for her. She seems too flighty in her enthusiasm for various people ever to have suffered long and intensely even from her greatest disappointment, the loss of Bosinney.

Monsieur Chevrillon quotes the conversation at the dinner given by Soames and Irene for June and Bosinney. He gives it as an example of Galsworthy's skillful use of trivial speeches to "reveal intimate depths of emotion, a whole world of dreams and passions." It is considered here as a means of revealing the contrast between Irene and June.

Just before dinner June becomes aware for the first time that Bosinney and Irene are in love. The scent of azaleas which had been so sweet and pleasant suddenly becomes unbearable for June. She speaks of this. Her mood of hurt pride and antagonism is set.

During this scene the author depicts the progress of the dinner, using the passive voice, which creates an easy realistic progression not unlike the good service to which Soames was accustomed. Thus, "soup was finished, and fish was brought." There is silence, then Bosinney,

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1 A. Chevrillon, Three Studies in English Literature, p. 171.
who is in love, says, "It's the first Spring day"; and as Chevrillon writes, "Irene echoes the young man's words; she is passive, magnetized; she speaks low." June exclaims, "Spring!" and abruptly denies that the air is springlike. In silence "the fish was taken away,"—here the active voice is used because this point of service arouses Soames' attention and he remarks that the champagne is very dry. No one cares what Soames says because each has his own thoughts. "Cutlets were handed" and refused by June—again her antagonism. Irene asks Bosinney if he has heard her blackbird. He replies that he has and that it has a "hunting song." Calling it that may be symbolic of his own feeling of love. More food is removed. Again Soames comments, this time upon the asparagus. Again there is no reply. He explains that June is drinking nothing. She snaps out that she never does, and says she hates wine. The atmosphere is becoming increasingly intense. Irene and Bosinney speak of the beauty of the azaleas and their scent. June says, "How can you like the scent?" She demands sugar for her coffee. Soames comments on the dessert being good—again there is no answer. Irene requests that the azalea be removed. "No,

let it stay," June says. Olives and caviare were served. A question is asked by Soames; it is unheard. June demands water. "Plums were brought." There was a lengthy pause. In perfect harmony all were eating them.

Then comes a touch of foreshadowing and symbolism which seems forced. Bosinney counts the plum stones—"This year—next year—some time—" and Irene adds, "Never." They comment on the beauty of the sunset, and June seeing their eyes meet, exclaims disdainfully, "A London sunset!" Soames, the practical, the unfeeling, takes a cigarette and asks what time the play begins, to which June and Bosinney are going. There is no reply. While the coffee and brandy are sipped, Irene says, "If only—!" "If only what?" asks the impatient June. Soames asks if they want a cab. June says they do not and demands her coat. Irene admires the beauty of the night. June tells Bosinney to come along.¹

June and Irene are portrayed throughout this scene by their words and silences which reveal the emotions each of them is experiencing. What makes the scene powerful is that thought shown at a time of high emotional strain, when one is angry and the other in love, the two women reveal in that high light the same fundamental traits of

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character of which they are normally possessed.

Their next dramatic meeting is in Bosinney's rooms. The reader is left to imagine when and how Irene heard of Bosinney’s death. Her ivory-white, pinched cheeks, the dark circles around her eyes, and the little bunch of violets in her hand seem to imply that she knows and is dazed by the news.

In contrast, June, who does not know, is flushed and angry. She berates Irene for spoiling her last chance to regain Bosinney, and exclaims, “You've ruined my life, and now you want to ruin his.” Irene’s reaction is one of such sadness and helplessness that tender, impulsive June cries, “No, no, Irene!” Irene’s head is bent to the violets and her "footsteps die away.” June is bewildered; she cannot understand being left "mistress of the field"—she has a glimmering of hope that Irene has given up Bosinney.

To some readers whom Galsworthy would have classed as "Forsytes," June's determination, courage and tenderness are more appealing than Irene's helplessness, beauty, and sorrow. It seems unfair, when the author has given a poetic picture of this passive, beautiful woman throughout the Forsyte novels, to point to this one scene as one time when his heroine becomes irritating. Unfortunately,
it is the very place where she should inspire greatest sympathy.

Edward Garnett, in his adverse criticism of the ending of the novel, protested that Irene became too weak a character after the climax of the story which was Soames' assertion of his "rights." Perhaps the author rightly intended to make her weaker then, for the hardening of her will power was due only to the temporary joy of her love for Bosinney. However, in the scene with June, this passivity reaches a degree which makes one wish for the moment that Irene (as Garnett once suggested) would commit suicide.

A reader's impatience with Irene in this scene is probably due to sudden perception of a certain quality in her character which although usually pleasing now becomes exasperating. This lack of resourcefulness, weakness, or whatever it may be is accounted for in the following comment on Galsworthy's women, by W. L. George:

(Galsworthy's) emotions tend to lead him to the excessive opposite of brutality. For instance, I am always malcontented by his women; Irene of The Man of Property, Audrey of The Patrician, the heroine of The Fugitive, the heroine of Beyond. All these women appear weak in their loveliness. Mr. Galsworthy seems to see women as such wretched prey, so helpless before men. This is true, but

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not so completely as he makes out. He does sketch clever women, cruel, grasping women, but his heroines are always tossed by fate, broken, used. And the heroine of a novelist represents Woman to that novelist.

Representing the stuffiest of mid-Victorian attitudes toward life are Aunts Ann, Hester, and Juley, who live with Timothy at Bayswater Road—the gossip center often referred to as "Forsyte 'Change."

The oldest of the sisters is Ann whose face personifies "the rigid possessiveness of the family idea." The severity of her face softens only when she looks indulgently upon her brothers.

Next is Hester whose expression "Oh, ask your Aunt Julia" shows her indecisiveness or maybe her laziness, for her guiding principle is conservation of energy.

Anyone making a faux pas is dubbed "a regular Juley" by the Forsytes. For Aunt Julia is known for her "instinct to do the wrong thing." Her face has a pouting expression as though she still resented the early death of her husband, Septimus Small. Although he died years ago, she is still sentimental about his memory. She longs to be loved as she dreams he used to love her. Another desire she has is

1H. V. Harrot, The Life and Letters of John Galsworthy, p. 466.
3Ibid., p. 7.
4Ibid., p. 89.
to be a ministering angel to her brother Jolyon when he is troubled.¹

When Swithin tells them of his drive with Irene, Juley bursts into tears, thinking of a "long ago driving tour she had once taken with Septimus Small."² Like all Victorian ladies she is apparently very modest and reticent. Secretly, like most of the ladies of her age, she enjoys romantic novels and adventure. One is surprised to find Juley enjoying George’s rather vulgar remarks, and gazing with secret pleasure at the nude statues in Swithin’s dining room.³

These three women serve to reveal Irene only by their curiosity and the conversation which they encourage on Forsyte ‘Change. They are directly portrayed by description and recording of their conversation.

The other Forsyte women do not serve to portray Irene except by the great fundamental contrast which they emphasize between all Forsytes and non-Forsytes.

There is tall majestic Mrs. James who is always patient and kind to the crotchety James, and always sympathetic with her son Soames in his trouble with Irene.

Not unlike her mother, Mrs. James, is substantial

¹ John Galsworthy, The Man of Property, p. 163
² Ibid., p. 161.
³ Ibid., p. 45.
Winifred Dartie whose chief aims in life are to be fashionable and to keep her husband out of mischief.

Mrs. Nicholas Forsyte is described as smiling "a smile of frightened jollity behind his (Nicholas') back." She was the wealthy girl whom Nicholas married before The Married Women's Property Act.

Her daughter, Euphemia Forsyte, is an unattractive girl who has a jealous woman's curiosity about the affairs of attractive women. With great enjoyment she describes June and Bosinney as they appeared at the play that night after dinner at Soames'. Again on Forsyte 'Change, and with even more enthusiasm, she describes the look in Mrs. Soames' eyes when she met Bosinney in a store where Euphemia was shopping.

Of Mrs. Roger Forsyte it is merely said that her husband had long since "reduced her to chronic dyspepsia." Her daughter, Francie, although limited by her father's stinginess, is a member of Society because she has written songs for children, waltzes, and a few verses. The Forsytes are proud of her until she begins a sonata which as Roger says is "rubbish that won't sell."

2 Ibid., p. 132.
3 Ibid., p. 164.
An example of the author’s ability to create a strong impression of a character in very few words is found in the picture of young Jolyon's wife.

It is evident from the watchfulness of young Jolyon that he knows his wife will be emotionally upset by his father's appearance, after the long years of estrangement, due to their elopement. With that knowledge one can fairly see the nobility of the face described as the husband sees it.

The colour had deepened in her thin, oval face, with its straight brows, and large, gray eyes. Her hair, brushed in fine high curves from her forehead, was going gray, like his own, and this grayness made the sudden vivid colour in her cheeks painfully pathetic.

As he watches her he sees something of secret resentments, longings and fears. "Her eyes under their twitching brows, stared painfully. And she was silent." While old Jolyon is playing with the children in the garden she leaves suddenly. Young Jolyon goes inside to find her shaking with sobs. "This passion of hers for suffering was mysterious to him." She had suffered from a hundred such moods and each time he was afraid that it was more than a mood.

He is bitter because his father has so disturbed

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1 John Galsworthy, The Men of Property, pp. 75-76.
his wife. This feeling is shown by the cross tone he uses to the children, a tone they have never before heard him use.

Young Mrs. Jolyon is a "foreigner," to the Forsyte way of thinking. She does not have courage and a strong will. So, as old Jolyon walks home, he thinks of her as "that woman whose face he had rather liked (but) who was too thin-skinned by half....and gave Jo a bad time."  

Another very minor woman character is Mrs. Hatty Chessman, who is a gay, fleshily dressed old lady of whom Swithin is fond. Her rather dashing youth is described in the tale "Timothy's Narrow Squeak." She appears in The Man of Property to complement the character of Swithin who is bold and daring in his taste for the ornate and colorful.

Two non-Forsytes who express their opinions of Irene, are Winifred's husband, Montague Dartie, and Mrs. MacAnderm--an ultra-modern, young divorcee who is received at Forsyte 'Change because she is always ready to gossip.

Montague Dartie, as a "man of the world" knows that Irene is a most attractive woman and he describes her beauty

1 John Galsworthy, The Man of Property, p. 77.
in terms of its appeal. He loses no chances to become friendly with his young sister-in-law, and is annoyed to find her aloof. Finally, on a drive with Bosinney, Irene and his wife, he forces his attentions on Irene, which provides Bosinney with a good chance to show his protective feeling for Irene.

Mrs. Mac Ander, the other non-Forsyte, may have been created for the purpose of forestalling, by her unpleasant contrast to Irene, any comments, such as those already cited on the lack of resourcefulness of Irene.

She is an energetic, clever, little person who contrived to get a divorce by putting all blame on her husband. She is extremely self-sufficient, and as the author adds, has "done more, perhaps in her own way than any woman about town to destroy the sense of chivalry which still clogs the wheels of civilization." Galsworthy becomes very ironical in his description of her. She is evidently the type of woman he hated and he is indirectly showing what Soames' wife might have done, had she not been the lovely, passive creature that he created her to be.

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1 John Galsworthy, The Man of Property, p. 159.
2 Ibid., p. 150.
3 Ibid., p. 222.
At Forsyte 'Change, "the little Mac Ander" describes in an elaborately casual manner having seen Bosinney and Irene in Richmond Park. She is eager to harm Irene, for she hates "one of those soft women, with what men call charm about them;" and she fights against "the subtle seductiveness" of which she secretly knows the power. For the sake of her own popularity she is promoting smartness and capability as criteria for the appeal of women.

This last character considered is an ultra-modern who is establishing among the late Victorians new standards of feminine allure.

Fleur, daughter of Soames' second marriage, and leading character of the later Forsyte trilogy, A Modern Comedy, is a glamorous fulfillment of the trends Mrs. Mac Ander foreshadowed.

Fleur incarnates the disharmony of the early twenties of this century. She is charming and selfish. Like her father she is possessive, and her greatest sorrow in life is that Jon, Irene's son by another marriage, refuses to marry her. Irene's influence on her boy is more unselfish and tender than Fleur's. Fleur, like Soames, cannot understand defeat by such a mysterious power.

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VI

THE INDIAN SUMMER OF A PORSYTE

Old Jolyon bought Bosinney's masterpiece, the ill-fated Robin Hill house, several years before the time of this idyl. Perhaps he bought it to tease that "man of property," Soames, for whom he has no love; perhaps he bought it because it caught his fancy and was as Bosinney intended it to be—"a house for a gentleman."

One afternoon in May he comes upon Irene, clad in violet-gray, sitting in the sunlight on a mossy log in the coppice. She is dreaming of the spring so long ago when on that very log Bosinney, the young architect, told her of his love. Old Jolyon senses that she has come here because of some memory, so he does not speak. He thinks how pretty she is and how he glimpsed her face about three weeks ago at the opera. It was the first time he had seen her since his party for June six years ago.

From now on old Jolyon's love of the beautiful and affection for women and children are given free play. He is alone at Robin Hill with Holly, "his little sweet," and he welcomes Irene, who, at his plea, often comes during these months.
He craves Irene's beauty and tenderness and so yearns to be with her that he overexerts himself. Despite her reproaches, he frequently journeys to London so that he may take her out to dine and to the opera. It pains him to think of her living alone in a tiny flat in Chelsea, giving music lessons to "a parcel of young girls" who "drum out scales with thick fingers."

With Forsyte concern for Irene's welfare, he draws a codicil to his will, providing money for her in the future. Also, he frequently forces upon her money which she can use to help the "fallen women" of London. She has helped these women since that night when one of them kept her from suicide and cared for her for three days. It was the night after Bosinney's death, when she slipped from Soames' house during the night and planned to step off the embankment.

Unlike most men of eighty-five, old Jolyon has a subtlety of understanding and sympathy. He knows that Irene is haunted by a mingling of painful and ecstatic memories when she is at Robin Hill. In thought, he often recalls that it was built by Soames as a means of winning her back so that security could be established. He senses the passion of the love affair of Irene and Bosinney. He remembers the tragedy of "the young leopard's" death
that foggy night.

These thoughts come to him as he listens to Irene playing his favorite music on the piano, or as he walks slowly with her among the flowers in the garden, or as he enjoys with her the opera in London.

He is thin, and a heavy pain often comes in his heart. He has never had a great love; life has brought him much sadness. He is longing for one day of youth, and desperately clutching his borrowed time. Meanwhile he brushes his silvery white hair back from his great dome-like forehead, sprinkles eau de Cologne on the snowy linen of his handkerchief, and smokes his excellent cigars, while sitting in his great leather chair in the library or in the sunlight on the terrace.

With the unnaturally heightened appreciation of one whose life thread is soon to be severed, he watches Irene, who, as she sits with the sunlight gleaming on the gold of her hair, or as she sways gracefully along the garden paths is the embodiment of love and beauty.

Galsworthy's character portrayal is well-defined enough to prevent any suspicion in this case of old Jolyon of an old man's weakness in his dotage. The author insures old Jolyon's dignity of mind and emotion and reveals clearly the feeling which he has for Irene by showing also
the affection which he has for his little granddaughter, Holly, and by expressing so beautifully the reason for old Jolyon becoming thin.

A man of eighty-five has no passions, but the Beauty which produces passion works in the old way, till death closes the eyes which crave the sight of Her.¹

In mid-July when flowers are full-blown, bees are droning lazily, and the scent of meadow grass is wafted on the warm soft breeze, old Jolyon is seated in the sun on the terrace, and the last gentle breath is drawn.

His last thought is of a "violet-grey figure passing over the daisies and dandelions... on the lawn."

In the next book of the Saga, In Chancery, when Irene tells young Jolyon of the peace and beauty of his father's death, his thought expresses the theme of this idyl.

We should all like to go out in the full summer with beauty stepping towards us across a lawn.²

¹ John Galsworthy, The Indian Summer of a Forsyte, p. 331.

² John Galsworthy, In Chancery, p. 585.
VII

IN CHANCERY

The necks of Irene and Soames, says Jolyon, are "in chancery." (In chancery—defined by the Oxford Dictionary—"Boxing in o., with head held under opponent's arm being pommelled—from difficulty of getting clear of old Court of Chancery.")

The beauty of Irene has broken the perfect pattern of possession that was Soames' life. It has given inspiration and peace to old Jolyon's last days. In this novel, In Chancery, it is to fascinate again and disturb Soames and then provide a haven for young Jolyon, now a man of fifty years and twice a widower who lives at Robin Hill.

It is 1899, seven years since the death of old Jolyon. Due to this old gentleman's kindness, Irene has lived in comfort during these years. Her life has been one of solitude, for she knows very few people in London.

Soames is now about forty-five, and is obsessed by the idea of having a son to whom he can leave his money.

He goes to young Jolyon whom he has not seen since the night he slammed the door of the Montpelier Square house in his face on the night of Bosinney's death about
thirteen years ago. As Jolyon was appointed by his father as Irene's legal adviser, Soames asks him to tell Irene that he wants a divorce.

Jolyon, who has not seen Irene since the same fateful night when he last saw Soames, goes as an adviser to her and takes Soames' message. When Irene asks why Soames wants a divorce after all these years, Jolyon's reply is that he must want an heir.

Since Irene has never had a lover, there are no grounds for divorce. She comments that Soames should have thought of this twelve years ago when he did have grounds for divorcing her, and when she begged him to do so.

Jolyon has the impression that time has not changed Irene. When he expresses this, she replies, "People who don't live are wonderfully preserved." He is charmed by her beauty, dress, and surroundings; and is filled with disgust for Soames who has caused her so much sorrow.

When he tells Soames that there are no grounds for divorce, Soames is very angry. Jolyon suggests that Soames assume guilt and get a divorce in that way, but Soames protests that he has already suffered enough because of her.

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Instead he goes to call on her, certain that she must be able to give him information on which he can act to get a divorce. He can hardly believe that she has for twelve years lived alone with her memories of Bosinney.

Soames finds her face more beautiful and her spirit more active and daring than it was previously. In true Forsyte fashion he attributes this to her independent income left by old Jolyon. He feels this power, and then the strange alluring fascination of her eyes, her skin, her hair. After lonely years he is in the presence of "some force subtle and elusive as atmosphere itself within him and outside."  

Irene is conscious that during his call Soames resolves to make her return to him. She goes to Jolyon for advice. Jolyon is impressed by the beauty and charm of Irene and by Soames' lack of understanding. As he walks by her side, unconsciously he holds himself straighter and walks with a younger step.

After leaving her, he meets Soames, who during the conversation reminds Jolyon that Irene is still his wife and that he is still "a man of property" as Jolyon's father once nicknamed him.

Jolyon thinks, "Beauty is the devil when you're

1John Galsworthy, In Chancery, p. 44.
sensitive to it." He laughs to himself when he recalls that once he warned June's fiancé, Bosinney, against a woman and had secretly wondered what she was like!

Soames' craving for Irene is renewed, and he again calls on her to plead that she come back to him under any terms which she may arrange. He is angry because she cannot give him a "reasonable" answer. She tells him that reason has nothing to do with it, and that she would rather die than return.

As he snaps the jewelled pin she has refused back into its case, he mutters, "It's nerves--nerves." She whispers, "Yes, nerves don't lie. Haven't you discovered that?" ¹

Soames, angry and insulted, wants to hate Irene. He accuses her of being selfish and wicked. She reminds him that for three years she tried to bear her lot.

When Irene tells Jolyon that she is going to Paris, she expresses pity for Soames, although she is relentless in forgiving him. Jolyon, in turn, feels pity for Soames who, he knows, cannot help himself. He feels much more pity for Irene who is going away to escape Soames--"so beautiful a creature, helpless, and fair game for

¹ John Galsworthy, In Chancery, p. 454.
A few months later he goes to Paris ostensibly to help Irene in business matters. He will not admit even to himself that it is the special "sensuous yet impersonal" sensation which she inspires in him, that has drawn him there.

Jolyon remains in Paris only a short time, as he receives word that his son, Jolly, has enlisted in the Boer War, and he rushes to London. During his stay in London he talks with Soames, who tells him of his resolution to get Irene back. Jolyon is telling him how impossible it would be, unwittingly uses the very thought that Irene used, that her return is not a matter of "reason." He also states that he will do whatever he can to secure Irene's happiness, for, as he says, "I am what they call a 'feminist', I believe."

That evening Soames, looking down into a London street, has an illusion that Irene is walking gracefully along. In *Indian Summer of a Forsyte*, old Jolyon, longing for Irene, also saw a vision of her standing by the piano in his drawing room. This shows the almost supernatural power of Irene's beauty on human souls.

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Although Soames is still trying to win Irene, he is also eager to have a son, so he makes arrangements about divorce procedure. For some time he has been appraising Annette Lamotte, twenty-year-old daughter of a shrewd French woman who is one of his tenants in Soho. There is a young doctor who is also interested in her, so fearing that by delay he may lose Annette, Soames arranges to have a detective shadow Irene in Paris.

Later he decides to go to Paris and once again plead with Irene. By chance he comes upon her in the Bois de Boulogne, and there by a little statue of Niobe she declares that she will never return though he hunts her to the grave. Insulted and indignant he reproaches her for her unreasonableness and wickedness. Her last refusal, and the only explanation she can give to such a man is:

"God made me as I am. . . . . wicked if you like—but not so wicked. . . that I'll give myself again to a man I hate."

Soames goes away from the park hurt and angry, yet haunted by the beauty of her soft gown and golden hair lighted by the sun flickering down through the leaves. That evening he goes to her hotel, hoping to see her again, but as he later discovers she has left for England.

He attempts to open the door of her apartment, as he wants to leave a note—a note to the effect that he knows of Jolyon's visit to Paris and will make trouble for him. Ironically, the detective sees Soames and makes a report to the London agency, describing Soames as "a man of forty-five with a guilty look,"\(^1\) as his wife's lover.

Meanwhile Irene has fled to Richmond Park, a short distance from Robin Hill. Jolyon visits her there, with the desire of telling her that he loves her and wants to protect her. However, he has not heard from Joly who is ill, and he is too worried about him to express his feelings to Irene.

Jolyon knows that Irene has affection for him, also that she understands why he hesitates to speak of his love of her. He knows, too, that Bosinney was the one great love of her life and that it will be a love of tenderness and understanding which they will have. He cannot believe that he, Forsyte at least in name, is to be entrusted with Beauty itself.

Soon after this, Irene and Jolyon receive notices that Soames is seeking a divorce basing his case on their friendship. Both of them pretend to be guilty of the charges brought. Jolyon thanks God that Irene has not

\(^1\)John Galsworthy, _In Chancery_, p. 536.
"that maddening British conscientiousness which refused
happiness for the sake of refusing."¹ He prays that he
may be non-Forsyte enough to "know how not to grasp and
destroy," how to be her "perch"—never her "cage."²

He looks at her "... and it seemed to his adoring
eyes that more than a woman was sitting there. The
spirit of universal beauty, deep, mysterious, which the
old painters, Titian, Giorgione, Botticelli, had known
how to capture and transfer to the faces of their women—
this flying beauty seemed to him imprinted on her brow, her
hair, her lips and in her eyes."³

That very day news comes of Jolly's death, and Irene's
presence gives Jolyon calmness and comfort.

After the divorce is granted, Soames marries beautiful
Annette Lamotte. Although Soames at forty-six realizes
that wealth and social position cannot be enough for a girl
of twenty, he selfishly marries her so that he will have a
son.

In the closing situation Soames' selfishness is even
more forcefully revealed. He is faced with a decision to
make. His wife is about to have a child, a son, Soames

¹ John Galsworthy, In Chancery, p. 551.
² Ibid., p. 557.
³ Ibid., p. 557.
believes. The doctor tells him that he must choose between
the life of the mother or that of the child, and that if
Annette lives, she will never have another child. Soames
chooses to have the child's life saved. By some chance
Annette does live. The child is a girl—Fleur.

Before seeing the baby, Soames goes to his father,
James, who is dying. As he dies, Soames knowing the dis-
appointment the truth would bring, tells him he has a new
grandchild—a boy. James replies by a triumphant sound,
than dies.

When Soames sees Fleur he forgets his desire for a
son and "the sense of triumph and renewed possession swell
within him. By God! This thing was his!"

The reader, as Galsworthy intended, is glad that at
last Soames has some happiness. Yet one remembers what
Soames for the moment forgets; that Irene gave Jolyon a
son and that fate has punished him for his selfishness
to Annette by giving him a daughter.

The strength of Forsytem is beginning to crumble!
A Forsyte has forever lost possession of what he most
desired to own completely—his strange, beautiful wife.
A foreign strain, abhorrent to pure Forsytem, has come into

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1 John Galsworthy, In Chancery, p. 596.
2 Ibid., p. 596.
the family. Soames' child, Fleur, will be half Forsyte and half French.
This interlude gives the awakening of eight-year-old Jon to Irene's beauty.

One afternoon as he impatiently awaits the return of his parents, Irene and Jolyon, he plays on the stairs of Robin Hill house, and the author slips the reader into the consciousness of that happy, little boy.

He can remember exactly how his father looks, but of his mother he can only see "something swaying with two dark eyes looking back at him."

She is someone who comes in dreams to bend over him and kiss him on the forehead; someone who comforted him when he cut his head on the nursery fender (a real experience in Galsworthy's childhood); someone whose sweet presence dispels his nightmares.

He does not know that he was born with a "thick, curly silver spoon in his mouth"—that his father is a man of fifty-two who has lost his only son, and that his mother is a woman thirty-eight, whose first child he is.

He is aware that "he plays second fiddle" in his father's heart, for he senses that his mother isn't just

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a mother and his father adores her.

With his mother Jon associates the gentle music of the piano, and a soft fragrance which he often goes to her wardrobe to sniff.

When they finally arrive, he jumps into his mother's arms and hugs her with all his might. As they have tea under the old oak on the lawn, he notices things about her which he never saw before. He sees how creamy her cheeks are, the silver in her thick gold hair, her throat that has "no knob", and the nice way she moves.

Later he asks his father about Glensofantrim where they have been. Jolyon tells him of the fairies there. To Jon's query about his mother seeing fairies, his father replies that she saw only Pan. Then when asked if he saw Pan too, he replies that he saw only Venus--Jon's mother.¹

When little Jon makes the excuse that he wants to watch his mother unpack, Jolyon smiles strangely and answers, "All right, old man, you go and love her!"²

As Jon watches his mother, he asks her what she saw at Glensofantrim. "Nothing but beauty, darling," is her

² Ibid., p. 616.
reply. Whereupon he asks what beauty is and she tells him it is the sky, the stars, the moon, birds, flowers, trees, and the waves of the sea. He exclaims, "...You! You're it, really, and all the rest is make-believe." ¹

That night he stays up for dinner. His father watches him with tender amusement for he knows that Jon is staring at his mother with new sight. He is looking at her soft gray dress, the creamy lace at her throat, and her soft dark eyes.

That night as she puts him to bed, he tells her that Daddy calls her Venus, but he thinks she's Guinevere. ²

IX

TO LET

The last novel of the Forsyte Saga begins in 1920, when Soames, now sixty-five, is visiting June’s picture gallery. He sits there waiting for Fleur who is to meet him. He is thinking sorrowfully of having to thrust her—his flower—into this strange, mad, post-war world.

As Soames looks up he sees a beautiful woman and a boy standing in front of a nearby picture. Although the woman is standing back to Soames; he is sure from the grace of the posture that it is his divorced wife, Irene. For a few minutes he watches her, envying the boy her smile of affection. Suddenly she sees Soames; her expression becomes stony and she turns away.

Unfortunately, Fleur arrives before Irene and Jon leave. Soames sees them exchange glances, and snatches Fleur away.

As they walk along the street, they again see Irene and Jon. Fleur wonders who they are, and remarks that the woman is beautiful. Soames hurries his daughter into a tea room where while they are eating, Irene, June, and Jon enter. Since escape is not possible this time, Soames munches his pastry and thinks how strange it is that he
is sitting there in that room with the only two people he ever loved—his first wife and his daughter by another wife.

Fleur, a calculating little miss, drops her handkerchief, and when Jon retrieves it she explains that F.F. stands for "Fleur Forsyte." He says that his name is "Forsyte" too. Knowing nothing of past history, the two wonder about relationship and hope they will meet again.

When Soames and Fleur are out of the shop at last, Fleur asks many questions about these Forsytes whom she has never met. Her father insists that if related it must be very distantly and hints at an old family feud. He catches his breath when she says she saw him staring at the woman, who is the most beautiful woman of her age that Fleur has ever seen.

Shortly after this, Holly Dartie, (Jolyon's daughter by his second marriage) invites her half-brother, Jon, to spend a few days with her in the country. Fleur, who is a cousin of Holly's husband, has begged to come at the same time. Thus unknown to their families, Jon and Fleur become friends and fall in love.

When Jolyon and Irene discover this, they are much distressed. At Jolyon's suggestion Irene and Jon go on a
trip to Spain. However, Jon does not forget Fleur. On the contrary he is always thinking of her, and is eager to return to England.

Shortly after Jon's arrival, Fleur accidentally learns the true story of her father and Jon's mother. True to Forsytism and her "having" nature, Fleur tries to get Jon to marry her secretly before he knows the true story. However, Irene's influence is as strong as ever, and her son will not marry secretly, knowing it would hurt her.

Jolyon has favored telling Jon of Irene's former marriage, because he knows that then Jon will realize how much his union with Fleur would hurt his mother. Irene, however, fears that her son, young and inexperienced as he is, will be shocked by her mistake of marrying Soames without loving him.

Finally, with Irene's consent, Jolyon writes a beautiful letter to his son explaining the horror of loveless marriages, and the attitudes of unthinking or self-righteous people toward such unions. He describes the torture that three years of such a marriage was to one as sensitive and beauty-loving as Irene. He gives the story with sympathy and understanding, writing of the love of Irene and Bosinney, of her twelve years alone after his
death, and of Soames' renewed attempts to induce Irene to return to him. He explains how Soames filed a divorce suit to keep Irene and him apart, and how since he was her trustee and sole support, they saw each other often and came to be in love, so that they married after Soames' divorce was decreed.

What Irene once said to old Jolyon, Jolyon expresses to his son—that it is not love that lasts forever, it is aversion. For this reason, he points out, it would be unbearable for her to have her son marry the daughter of a man who once owned her "as a master owns a slave."\(^1\)

The letter discloses the love and harmony in these twenty years of the married life of Irene and Jolyon. It shows that beauty can remain where there is selflessness and sensitivity.

Jolyon is in his seventy-second year and suffers from a weak heart. After the effort of writing the letter and giving it to Jon, he dies in the same great chair where old Jolyon died. Like his father's, Jolyon's last thoughts are of beauty and love, for scrawled across the page of his open book is the name, "Irene."

Fleur in true Forsyte manner tells her father that

\(^1\) John Galsworthy, *To Let*, p. 806.
when one wants something one doesn't think of others. She begs him to go to Irene and persuade her to let her son marry his daughter. At last, Soames, knowing that otherwise he will lose his daughter's affection, goes to Irene and tells her that if the marriage takes place, he will not disturb her nor her son.

As always, he is baffled by her attitude. Bluntly he asks her if she opposes the marriage. Her reply is, "With all my heart; not with my lips." Soames then asks her to call Jon, and demands, of him, a message for Fleur. Jon, for the first time seeing his mother in the presence of Soames, is startled by her apparent aversion for him. Unhesitatingly he asks Soames to tell Fleur that "it's no good."  

Some critics protest that Irene and Jolyon, rebels against property rights, are exerting such rights over Jon; Soames, they think, acts as the model parent and is unselfish. Mr. Galsworthy explains in the preface to the Saga that such a criticism is not justifiable since the story reveals that Jon acts because the facts of the case are such as they are, not because of his mother's command. Soames, he explains, is still in character since

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1 John Galsworthy, To Let, p. 341.

2 Ibid., p. 342.
Fleur is now his dearest possession and in order to keep her he must do as she asks.

The reader also observes that previous to this scene Galsworthy makes Jon have some slight qualms about Fleur's willfulness and "having" way. Another point against the criticism of Soames is that when in Irene's presence the thought comes to him that it would be sweet revenge to see her and his daughter living in that ill-fated Robin Hill house where he once wanted to live with her.

Humiliated by Jon's words, Soames leaves Robin Hill forever. When he gives the awful news to Fleur, she flings back the most cruel question possible: "What did you—what could you have done in those old days?" 1

Fleur has experienced the only real love of her life, and is defeated. She assumes a gay, hard, carefree manner, and shortly after marries Michael Mont, a member of the aristocracy. Her real spirit seems dead, but it flares up and again is defeated when Jon returns from America, in the novel Swan Song.

Soames realized at the time of the sale of Timothy's house (the youngest of the old Forsytes had finally died at one hundred and one years) that a certain stability and essential strain in English life had gone. There is mid-

1 John Galsworthy, To Let, p. 845.
Victorian aunts and uncles had lived their long uninteresting lives; now the house was vacant.

The last novel of the Saga closes with Soames thinking of the old order:

To Let—the Forsyte age and way of life, when a man owned his soul, his investments, and his woman, without check or question. And now the State had, or would have his investments, his woman had herself, and God knew who had his soul. 'To Let'—that sane and simple creed! 

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1 John Galsworthy, To Let, p. 869.
FINDINGS ABOUT IRENE IN THE FORSYTE SAGA

As a symbol of the disturbing mysterious spirit of beauty, Irene moves gracefully throughout The Forsyte Saga. As a human figure she is a woman of sensitivity and refinement who has made a mistake in marriage, so serious that it leaves her with a life-long antipathy for the one who once enslaved her.

In the first novel, The Man of Property, she is seen through various Forsyte eyes as the elegant, refined Mrs. Soames whose beauty like a fine piece of china or a rare painting is a pride and joy to the family. Yet one and all, they sense something strange and "foreign" about her--something, they can't express exactly what, which frightens them.

Irene is sorrowful and passive as she lives in the beautiful Montpelier Square House; she is Soames' captive, and is helpless. She does not speak of her trouble, for no one would understand.

To bring her out of her indifference, Soames hires Bosinney to build the Robin Hill house. Although Irene shows no enthusiasm about this plan, ironically she and the medium, Bosinney, by whom this new "cage" is to be
fashioned, fall in love.

Irene becomes happy as she is when young Jolyon watches her with Bosinney in the Botanical Gardens. As he observes, after starvation she is eating her heart out with love. This ecstatic happiness is fleeting, for with the death of Bosinney, she is completely crushed with suffering.

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In the interlude, *Indian Summer of a Forsyte*, Irene is a graceful, gentle spirit, who, after years of solitude and hardship, comes to an atmosphere of beauty at Robin Hill, where like Beauty itself she soothes and loves old Jolyon.

Old Jolyon, Forsyte that he has been, has never dared to abandon himself to the enjoyment of beauty of which he is capable.

It gives joy to the heart of a reader to find an old man so chivalrous, so dignified, so deserving of devotion, attended by Beauty who in her train brings soft music, sweet fragrance, understanding, affection, peace, and the mellow warmth of summer days.

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In the novel, *In Chancery*, Irene, after twelve years of living alone, (except for the few months at
Robin Hill) becomes more daring and spirited. Always she has had an aloof sort of poise, but now this is strengthened by a determination never to return again to the man she hates. This change may have been caused by her taste of real love and by her solitary hours. With her decreased passivity she talks more and her spirit is expressed more by words of wisdom and subtlety than by eloquent silences as in the first novel.

She has been an outcast so long that she has an objective outlook, and a wise philosophy of life. One feels that like "young" Jolyon she has established her own standards and holds fast to her own beliefs, regardless of the opinions of the rest of society. It is not strange that these two marry and live in joy and harmony.

Although Irene has become more animated, she is still the universal spirit of beauty which again fascinates Soames and then causes Jolyon, tired at fifty, to become young and happy.

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In *Awakening*, Irene is beauty as it is seen through the eyes of her little son. She is comfort for bumps and bruises; she is soft music drifting up to him at bed time; she is the fragrance of the summer night; she is a great
white flower—something swaying and beautiful with great dark eyes.

In the last novel of the *Sage, To Let*, Irene is the adored wife of Jolyon, and the mother of Jon. As she moves about the beautiful Robin Hill house and gardens, she brings peace, love, and perfect companionship to them.

The Forsyte idea that where beauty is there also is immorality, is perhaps a misconception of the theory that where beauty is there is always unrest and sorrow.

Into the serenity of Irene's life, comes the problem of Jon's love for Fleur. Her old mistake, her awful life with Soames, has come back to harm that which she loves most. Soames, suggesting that she let Jon marry Fleur, asks cruelly if she believes in Nemesis. Her reply is, "Yes."

Jon, however, is influenced by his mother's love and his father's dying wish for her more than by his desire for Fleur, the clever, glamorous, little modern. Again beauty escapes the Forsytes, and they are hurt by a defeat which they cannot understand.

Irene's influence continues throughout the next Forsyte trilogy, *A Modern Comedy*. In *Passers By*, an inter-
lude in that book, she makes her last personal appearance.

Irene and Jon, who live in America, happen to be in Washington, D. C. at the same time when Soames and Fleur, who are taking a trip around the world, stop there. Soames has been making some amusing manoeuvres to prevent Fleur and Jon from seeing each other. For once fate has been with him and his plans have worked out well.

Alone and unobserved, a tired old man, Soames watches Irene as she plays the piano that evening. Her hair is powdery above the soft gray of her gown, and she moves lightly to the rhythm of the soft notes she is playing.

Soames thinks:

There sits a woman I have never known.... Ah! She had had many faults, but the worst of her faults had always been, was still, her infernal mystery! 

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1 John Galsworthy, "Passers By" in The Two Forsyte Interludes, p. 59.
ABSTRACT

Like the sons of many well-to-do, upper middle class families of Victorian England, John Galsworthy received his education at two of the great old institutions--Harrow and Oxford. Then, after a little travel and some law reading, his property-owning father expected him to become a prosperous London barrister.

To the great disappointment of his father, John decided to become a writer which, he thought, would be a much more satisfying life work. His decision was due to the encouragement and inspiration of a talented and beautiful young woman who had recently entered this Galsworthy family. She was Ada Cooper Galsworthy, wife of John's cousin, Arthur Galsworthy.

Mrs. Galsworthy's tragic life with her first husband, and her long years "in chancery" before she could finally marry John Galsworthy, undoubtedly suggested to the author the theme of his greatest novel, The Man of Property, which is the first part of The Forsyte Saga.

The theme of this novel has two closely united strands. One is the horror of a loveless marriage for which the divorce laws of England offered no fair means of dissolution. The other strand is the disturbing influence of beauty upon a man of possessive nature who tries in vain
to grasp it and keep it imprisoned forever.

To express this theme, the author created Soames, "the man of property", and Irene whose prototype was probably the dark-eyed, fair-skinned, sensitive Ada. However, he made Irene true to his theory that characters in fiction should "diverge from the original", and in expressing the theme of the story she becomes, not merely Ada Galsworthy, but the embodiment of all that is beautiful and desirable in womankind.

True to another of the author's beliefs, namely, that in fiction plot evolves from the characters, Soames' spiritual bleeding to death for Irene becomes the absorbing plot of this novel.

Due to the passivity and elusiveness of her nature, Galsworthy purposely created Irene as pale in contrast to the hardy Forsytes. The process of presenting her was probably more difficult than that of presenting the vital Forsytes, and Galsworthy's artistry in giving Irene to the world is as delicate and poetic as the nature of that creature herself.

The most effective technique in the presentation of Irene is that of mental and conversational comments on her made by the many members of the Forsyte family. Although collecting these comments and recording them as
they are thought or uttered by each of the Forsytes
divests them of their effectiveness and reduces the
poetry of Irene, it seems to be the best way of studying
this method of indirect character presentation.

After thoroughly establishing the character of Irene
in this first novel, Galsworthy continues to portray her
influence throughout the rest of the Saga, and several
other Forsyte stories.

In the interlude, Indian Summer of a Forsyte, which
follows The Man of Property, Galsworthy makes Irene a creature
of peace and beauty who enchants and comforts an elderly
gentleman who has never before had his share of beauty and
love.

Here Irene is different from the passive, helpless
wife of Soames, and from the supremely happy, then grief-
stricken lover of Bosinney.

Irene's serenity and quiet joy in this prose idyl
are due, not to a change in her nature which is essentially
ageless and permanent, but to the fact that at last she
is in an environment suitable to her. Like one of the
flowers in old Jolyon's garden, she blooms shedding her
beauty and grace.

The author once commented on such women by saying
that they are made to love and be loved and if deprived
of this, they are not living.
In In Chancery Irene is again under the influence of love and understanding, this time as expressed by young Jolyon. She becomes more determined and powerful in her dealings with Soames, than she was in the first novel. Twelve years of life alone have only strengthened her in the determination never to return to him.

At the close of the story, finally unshackled from Soames, she marries young Jolyon. They live at Robin Hill which Soames had originally built as a new "cage" for Irene, and where young Jolyon, like his father, will live and die, happy and peaceful under the caress of beauty.

In Awakening, an interlude, Galsworthy presents Irene through the eyes of her little son, Jon, who is developing a consciousness for his mother's beauty.

As in the "Indian Summer" interlude, Irene is at Robin Hill in an atmosphere of adoration, understanding, and harmony, living with her husband, young Jolyon, and her little son, Jon. She holds first place in the heart of each, and returns their love with warm devotion.

In the last novel, To Let, Galsworthy has Soames' passion for Irene continue in his daughter Fleur who falls in love with Irene's son, Jon.

Jon's refusal of Fleur's love, comes as another stinging blow of self-inflicted fate brought upon Soames by his
marrying twice for selfish reasons.

In bringing in this reversion of passion, the author must also of necessity bring grief to the character Irene. Through her husband, Jolyon's, mind, it is revealed that she is suffering from memories of the past, a life-long hatred of Soames, and the fear that the "having" nature of his offspring will ruin the life of her son.

Finally that problem is solved, and although Irene is saddened by her husband's sudden death, the reader feels that she is at peace for she has escaped the Forsytes. One knows that wherever she may be, her life will be beautiful. Until the hour of her death she will have what Galsworthy first created her to represent—youth, love, and beauty.
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Swan Song—novel.

End of the Chapter

(About the Charwell family which is related to the Forsyte family).

Maid in Waiting—novel.

Flowering Wilderness—novel.

One More River—novel.

or

Over the River