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## THE LIFE OF THE ARTIST IN SOMERSET MAUGHAM'S "THE MOON AND SIXPENCE"

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### ABSTRACT

This article is devoted to the literary trends in the 20th century in English literature and literary work of great author William Somerset Maugham. It intends to show the power of art comparing human needs or convenient, particularly, the author portrays the artist's devotion to art, his sacrifice and signify the value of beauty through the work of Somerset Maugham "The Moon and Sixpence".

### KEYWORDS

English literature, 20th century literature, author, art, money, moon and six pence.

### INTRODUCTION

The name of Somerset Maugham is connected with critical realism in the English literature. He was a very talented person and possessed a keen and observant

eye in his best works he mocked foolishness, philistinism, hypocrisy, narrow-mindedness, self-interest, selfishness, utilitarian approach to art. His

relationship with art was not so solid for placing him among the best English writers of this period. Because, his work is marred by cynicism and disbelief in nature of human being. Maugham considers that it is not in the power of man to reform the world. In his works he compares life to the theatre where human comedy as old as the world itself, is being staged. As the course of human life cannot be varied, he believes in the wisdom of those who see the defects of the world but learn to accept it as it is. Maugham was always proud of his objective and composed view of life. He always tries to observe life dispassionately and clinically with great efforts for all his life, and describes and uses the result of observations accurately in his novels. His novels start mostly from a character.

However, his novels are naturalistic and miserable, they are very interesting and smooth which are tied to each other logically well. Maybe it is owing to the fact that he writes the truth of human nature. John Brophy writes about this in his "Somerset Maugham", as follows; "It is one of Maugham's distinctions that he presents his stories as matters of fact, with the minimum sacrifice of verisimilitude, and yet makes them readable. He achieves this without relying on the detective story's device of mystification. Indeed, Maugham's stories often do without suspense, which is commonly regarded as an essential element of any good story. Nor does he rely upon topicality, as the political reporter does, or upon argument as the philosopher does, both of whom can create a kind of indirect suspense because the conclusion of their narrative may affect the reader's personal life. In a Maugham's story the reader's self-interest is not

involved: nothing is presupposed in the reader but a potential interest in the diverse conventions and oddities of human beings" <sup>1</sup>.

Methods. To understand Maugham's achievement, it is necessary to recognize there was more to him than mere popularity. His latest biographer, Jeffrey Meyers, rightly emphasizes the magnitude of Maugham's contribution to 20<sup>th</sup> century literature. The indefatigable Meyers – who's written biographies of Hemingway, D.H.Lawrence, Conrad, Frost, Poe, Scott Fitzgerald, Katherine Mansfield, and Edmund Wilson, among others – is no slouch when it comes to investigating his subjects' personal lives, and he has some fresh things to say about Maugham's early romances, his troubled marriage, and his work as a spy.

Citing the declaration by critic and thriller writer Julian Symons that "the modern spy story began with Somerset Maugham's "Ashenden" (1928)," Meyers notes the influence of that somberly realistic novel of espionage on writers as sunlike as Graham Greene, John le Carré, and Ian Fleming.

Four of Maugham's novels – "Of Human Bondage", "Cakes and Ale", "The Moon and Sixpence", and "The Razor's Edge" – are classics of their kinds. Moreover, he is considered as dramatist and short story writer. His well-known stories are "Rain", "The Unconquered", "Gigolo and Gigolette", "The Man with Scar", "The Luncheon" and others. Maugham's short stories are usually very sincere, interesting, well-constructed and logically developed.

We can comprehend how he was great according to just an only fact that the number of his literary works

<sup>1</sup> The article of "THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN AND ART IN THE NOVEL "THE MOON AND SIXPENEC" BY W.S.MAUGHAM" by Iroda Kaharova Sidikovna , Bukhara State University

that he had written are twenty four plays, nineteen novels and a great deal of short stories, besides travel works and an autobiography. The mature period of Maugham's literary career began in 1915, when he published one of his famous novels, "Of Human Bondage". The author himself described this novel as an "autobiographical novel".

Discussion and results. According to Ralph Waldo Emerson's opinion "Artists must be sacrificed to their art. Like bees, they must put their lives into the sting they give". And the work of "The Moon and Sixpence" is the best example to prove his words. Because the painter – Strickland devoted himself absolutely to art, not paying any attention to the realities, in other words his surroundings: neither his family, his wife, his son nor his prestigious job – stockbroker. He was sure of his pure dream – *become an artist* would come true which he had kept in his heart for forty years, and finally decided to try it. The story begins with poor and miserable living conditions of Strickland at a hotel in the Avenue de Clichy. This place was crowded with all kinds of people, and it is a poor area of Paris, where you could not expect what would happen suddenly. The friend of his family cannot expect that Strickland is from a successful stockbroker to a man with typical image of an artist such as poor, untidy, dirty, never look smart and neat.

As there are two sides of the coin we can look through the main personage from different angles. For instance, from one hand considering him as an ordinary man:

- ✓ Being null: He is a husband, a father and a broker;
- ✓ Being honest: He always says exactly what's in his mind, what he considers true;

- ✓ Being rude and in bad manner: brutal sarcasm, cuss:  
"Damn it all"  
"You blasted fool"...
- ✓ Not minding social criticisms: with empty soul, one day just leaves, no more emotion:  
"Everyone will think you are a perfect swine – Let them"  
"You don't care if people ... their bread? – Not a damn"
- ✓ Selfish: put personal concerns "painting" first regardless of others;
- ✓ Heartless, irresponsible with cold attitude: abandons his family and no cares anymore about his family although they are suddenly left. His children are thrown into chaotic society without any regret even though they are dependent on them:  
"Don't you care for her anymore? – Not a bit"  
"... law has some protection to offer them"  
"... I haven't got any particular feelings for them"...
- "I've supported her for seventeen years. Why shouldn't she support herself for a change?"

As above stated we can call him as selfish, irresponsible, not caring his family. And for Strickland's family he is a bad father and husband. In the terms of the normal concepts in the society, Strickland is considered to be a selfish person who can abandon all important things to pursue his own passion.

On the other hand, he is absolutely different person. As an artist we can respect his sacrifice and devotion toward art with great grades.

- ✓ Being brave and passionate about art:

- Worth worshipping, leaves anything behind to pursue art his career, his friends, his fame even his family, not care about the future;
- accepts poor life;
- ignores the worst things people can think about him;
- begins to paint at an old age
- ✓ Understanding the rotten society:
  - at that period everything estimated and everything has their own price but for Strickland the beauty and art are priceless and he never wanted to involve money towards his paintings and his art;
  - Strickland's viewpoint: painting is true passion, not for money
- ✓ Being a real talent:
  - create the wonderful pictures, which consists of great content and perfect beauty what he considers to real pure art
- ✓ respecting pure art:
  - make his wife promise to burn down his masterpiece in fear that it will be spoilt by commercial world of money
- art was non-profitable. It can be proved by the words of the main personage "I rather wanted to be a painter when I was a boy, but my father made me go into business because he said there was no money in art";
- Strickland goes against ideology ties to follow art:
  - "I want to paint"
  - "I've got to paint"
- ✓ family and social responsibilities:
  - according to bourgeois concept: men must be responsible for his family otherwise he will be despised among people;
  - Strickland: nothing means to him abandoning his family  
"Everyone will think you a perfect swine."  
"Let them."
- ✓ no room for trivial and ordinary pleasures of life in great art:
  - immolate everything to be an artist;
  - protect *Beauty* and *Art* from money and sexual relation

I honestly believe that Strickland is worth to be great and real artist who can scarify for real art in the bourgeois society.

In this novel there are a lot of themes we can observe and distinguish:

- ✓ The revolt of an individual against the well-established conventions of bourgeois society:
  - money worship society;

I'll tell you what according to some research, the title was taken from a review of Maugham's novel "Of Human Bondage" in which novel's protagonist, Philip Carley, is described as "so busy yearning for the moon that he never saw the sixpence at his feet." In addition, according to a 1956 letter from Maugham, "If you look on the ground in search of a sixpence, you don't look up, and so miss the moon." Maugham's title echoes the description of Gauguin by his contemporary biographer, Meier-Graefe (1908): "He [Gauguin] may be charged with having always wanted something



else.” The title served to Maugham as a symbol for two opposing worlds — the material world quit by Strickland, where everything is thought of in terms of money, and the world of pure artistry craving for beauty. As I was saying the author – Somerset Maugham doesn’t use any word without reason. And the title of this novel also has its meaning. The images of “the moon” and “sixpence” are seen from two points. The similarity of them – they are both in the same shape. However, **the moon** symbolizes art and beauty but far away in the bourgeois society, while **sixpence** signifies the real life with all its worries, calculation and fighting.

The whole novel goes with internal conflict between art, his dream and his real life, his responsibilities, social ties contemporary society.

## CONCLUSION

English literature is passing through a period of transition and any forecasts concerning its further development would be arbitrary. One thing seems certain, however – the best works of contemporary prose and poetry are being put at the service of the momentous issues of today and bear relevance to the needs aspirations of humanity. Literature is the vision of life. Its main aspect is human being, his acts, his fights, his love, his hatred, happiness and grief. Human being is considered to be the leading core in the creation of literature, because the author creates the overall content of the work through the human being. While creating literary image, the writer shows his individual aspects as well. It is not an easy task to get to the heart of the readers through the books. One of the great writers of the English Literature William Somerset Maugham could combine both human character and the art in his novel “The Moon and

Sixpence”. The novel could show us the devotion of a man to art, his sacrifice and finally his grief. He ends up his life getting blind and living a miserable life. William Somerset Maugham can be considered as one of the brightest representatives of the English Literature. That’s why, in my opinion, it is important to read, analyze and spread his novels to the people.

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