

Analysis on Strickland's Pursuit in *The Moon and Sixpence*

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Abstract: *The Moon and sixpence* is one of the three major novels of the British novelist, Maugham William Somerset. The full paper discusses the remarkable life of Strickland. The paper focuses on Strickland's pursuit. To begin with, it introduces two major pursuits in Strickland's life. One of the pursuits is freedom, and another is the pursuit of dreams. These two major pursuits had made great difference on Strickland. He gives up the sixpence that ordinary people yearn for and pursue the moon in his heart. Then the paper analyzes the reasons for the pursuit of freedom and dream and the ways to pursue them. This paper aims at studying Strickland's life. From his different choices, I analyze the importance of freedom and dreams to everyone and reveals how to make a choice between the moon and sixpence in the novel.

Keywords: Pursuit; freedom; dream; constraint.

INTRODUCTION

William Somerset Maugham, a British novelist and playwright, was born in Paris on January 25, 1874. He has many masterpieces, for example, the drama *Circle*, the novel *The Chain of Life*, *The Moon and Sixpence*, and the short story collection *The Trembling of Leaves* and so on. Among them, *The Moon and sixpence* is one of the three long works of William Somerset Maugham.

When Maugham was ten years old, his parents died. He was sent back to England to be raised by his uncle. After Maugham entered Canterbury Royal, he was bullied by large boys all the time. All in all, when he was young, his lonely time overshadowed his young soul. During the period of his childhood, the experience cultivated his aloof, susceptible, quiet character. The experience also accentuated the importance to his world ideology and subject of his literal work.

Maugham took medicine as his specialty in London. But later relied on his heritage, Maugham engaged in his literary creation while giving up medicine. In the following years, Maugham wrote several novels. He did in-depth research on Maupassant's works and followed the naturalistic expression style. In 1902 he turned to drama creation and made it. He became a popular playwright, so as is known to all, his works are very dramatic. Although his literary creation is traditional, he has a strong personality. He is frank and candid. Therefore, he always subjected to criticism by literary criticism.

Maugham was the same as the other writers who do not want to be blind to convention. He is also eager to pursue the self-worth of the new era, but at the same time he cannot bear to disrupting traditional Victorian culture completely. It is precisely from this kind of psychology that Maugham chose to escape and pursue the detachment of human nature. The protagonist of his novel has an indifferent attitude to the external world. He had a perfect memory of keeping loneliness. In the cage of Western culture, they were at a loss and frightened all day long. In a series of questions, Maugham exiled his protagonist to seek the place freely where the soul resides. Strickland is a typical example of this. First of all, let's briefly introduce this novel.

The hero of the novel is Strickland, who was a securities broker. His family fraught with peace and joviality, including an elegant wife and two lovely children. But in the seventeenth year of their marriage, he suddenly left for Paris and gave up his career and family. Everyone thought he was having an affair, however they discovered that Strickland was only for painting.

At this time, Strickland did not have any basis for painting. He just wanted to achieve his dream. To outsiders, he was simply crazy. His life began to become embarrassing. He nearly succumbed to starvation and disease. His paintings were also terrible completely. What's more, no one wanted to purchase his artwork in addition to a poor painter, Dirk Stroeve. In fact, he never sold paintings.

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Strickland kept wandering and appeared in Tahiti, and finally married an indigenous girl. The girl's name was Ata. At this time, he seemed to be content to his life. He and his wife lived in a secluded place. Unfortunately he soon became infected with leprosy. In the year before his death, he became blind. Ata looked after him until he carried out the colossal mural. At last, his body ulcerated and died. According to Strickland's last words, his wife burned the house full of murals.

This novel exerted a ponderable influence on the literary circle. Many scholars have studied this novel on the contradiction between life and art. The symbolic meaning also had been interpreted. What touched me more in this novel is the pursuit in Strickland's life. The reasons and the ways of each pursuit should be explored. Firstly, the paper will explore the pursuit of freedom in his life and how and way Strickland gets rid of the bondage of the family. Then, the paper will analyze the pursuit of dream in his life. He eventually gave up the marginal job for the sake of dream.

Chapter One the Pursuit in Strickland's Life

The pursuit of life is an attitude towards life. Many people have the motivation of life because of the pursuit. The pursuit can make the rode of life smooth. At the same time, it can allow everyone to get rid of difficulties in trouble. As a matter of fact, everyone has his own pursuit. Someone pursues a material world full of money or desires, while others pursue a spiritual world full of pleasure and warm. All in all, whenever one has a pursuit, the life will be full of fun and color.

1.1 The Pursuit of Freedom

Freedom is regarded as a sacred thing that man can control himself, act by his will, and be responsible for his actions. On the one hand, getting rid of marriage was one freedom in Strickland's life. On the other hand, Strickland ignored the material bondage, which was another freedom in his life.

To begin with, we could find the pursuit of freedom from his choice in life. Strickland was originally an agent of the British stock exchange. He and his wife lived together for 17 years, and raised a pair of children, but when he was at the age of 40, and he left his homeland went to Paris to pursue painting. For a person with a stable income and status, it seemed confusing to cut off all ties with the past. What's more unbearable is that he completely ignored the damage to his relatives and friends, even with absolute indifference. If his indifference must be given a reason, it may be the bondage of the soul. He desired for freedom. Secondly, the attitude towards his appearance also showed his longing for freedom. When Strickland was in London, he dressed well, but looked ill at ease. As for now, he was untidy and ill-kempt, but looked pleasant in French. Strickland didn't want to care about

the views of others as before, and he was tired of the boring manner to communicate with others all day. When the narrator came French to meet Strickland, he described Strickland as "he still wore the same suit in five years before, which was torn and stained, threadbare, and it hung upon him loosely, as though it had been made for someone else." (111; ch.20) As for Strickland, external things, such as appearance are the obstacles that bind him in his pursuit of freedom. He didn't want to be restrained by how he looked. He paid attention to the freedom, instead of appearance. Therefore, it was a way to seek freedom by ignoring appearance. Last, he treated public opinion with indifference. Whether it's a praise or a slander, Strickland paid no attention to them. Dirk Stroeve thought Strickland was a great artist, however Strickland didn't have an excitement at all, just said the word "what the hell do you suppose I care." (215; ch.40) In face of the moral and ethical condemnation, Strickland did not have any sense of guilt. He even laughed at Stroeve. The narrator said a lot of mean words to him, "I think you're detestable. You're the most loathsome beast that it's ever been my misfortune to meet." (207; ch.40) However, these words made no difference to Strickland. His mood didn't waver at all. He regarded these words as "I thought it damned silly sentimental." (210; ch.40).

We can also find the freedom in Maugham. Maugham was one of the most famous writers in Britain in the 20th century. In his voluminous creation, "freedom" had always been a focus of his attention. Maugham mentioned the desire for freedom many times in his prose and essays. The main meaning of "freedom" in Maugham's writing is to get rid of the bondage of substances and spirits, and to obtain some kind of experience of individual existence through the liberation of the soul. In the novel "Moon and Sixpence", Strickland not only achieved the highest artistic achievement in Tahiti, but also realized the ultimate freedom of the soul.

1.2 The Pursuit of Dream

The dream in Strickland's mind was being a painter. In order to pursue his dream, he gave up his superior job and happy family. He even cut off all relationship with his friends, just for finishing the paintings. In Strickland's mind with full attention, only the dream can support him.

It was the first time that Strickland gave up his privileged job for dream. Strickland liked to paint when he was a child, but he had to choose to do business as his father's guidance. In the expectation of his father, he married a virtuous wife. His first half of life was extraordinary. He lived in a secular society wrapped in money and reputation. It was difficult to achieve his dream because of the bounds from his families and society. During 17 years, he never talked about his

dream to everyone. In fact, this strong desire for creation always ate into his heart, and his pursuit of dreams never stopped. So he decided to run away, simply because he did not want to go back to all the mediocrity. Strickland announced to the world that he wanted to paint. If Strickland continued to be a securities broker, their life would go on without any ups and downs. Perhaps one day they will grow old unconsciously, and their sons and daughters would marry at the right time. He and his wife would enjoy the comfortable retirement days. That must be the story of innumerable couples, and the pattern of life it offers has a homely grace. The author regarded this kind of life as "a placid rivulet, so calm, so salient, so indifferent." (35; ch.7) However, there is a fever in his blood asking for a wilder course. He desired to live with painting though it's dangerous. It was the second time that Strickland ignored the morality and ethics in exchange for his dream. He robbed his friend's wife in order to complete his painting. He even regarded Blanche as a model, not a mistress. He completed a nude portrait of Blanche as a model. As for him, when the painting was completed, there is no meaning to accompany with Blanche. In the face of morality and ethics, he only thought Blanche had a wonderful body. What he wanted was just painting a nude. It was the third time that when Strickland had the leprosy. During this time, he continued to draw. When Dr. Coutras asked what he could do for Strickland, his wife said that Strickland wanted nothing else except some paints. Though the life was terrible, he chose to paint on the wall of the house.

We could realize Strickland's determination to pursue the dream from those three matters. Compared with painting, he did not care the creditable job. And in order to accomplish an excellent painting, he ignored what others thought of him. In face of the death, he can keep calm with the support of his dream. In some degree, when he pursued the dream, material, public opinion and death made no difference to him.

Chapter Two the Pursuit of Freedom

The freedom makes a great difference on one's life. In a certain degree, the height of the freedom determines the height of life. No matter how noisy the outside world is, it is necessary to stick to the peace of mind and find a freedom for yourself. In fact, only if someone owns a free mind, he can soar. All people in the world yearn for freedom, which is one of the conditions of the spiritual world. Someone even holds the view that freedom is more important than life, and regards freedom as a goal to pursue.

2.1 The Reasons for the Pursuit of Freedom

On the one hand, it is human nature to break all the bonds of the spirit and pursue freedom at all costs. The pursuit for freedom was actually getting rid of constraint in spirit. Strickland yearned for being a spiritual seeker. He wanted to meet his spiritual needs,

so he pursued freedom. This spirit supported Strickland to live in the old and shabby hotel of Paris. He had no satisfying food and settlement. He was willing to draw the terrible and clumsy paintings that everyone sneered at. He was also willing to wander from Paris to Marseille, begging to work for enough travel expenses. He had been suffering from hunger, disease, and even death. As a typical securities broker, Strickland gave up his mediocre status. Strickland practiced the proper order of life, just as he initially gave the impression of the narrator, "He was just a good, dull, honest, plain man." "It was a bit rough." "The appearance was very ordinary." "He was probably a worth member of society, a good husband and father, an honest broker." (33; ch.6) To be honest, his life was like an invariable symbol, without any color and interest. In the end, he chose to draw and get spiritual satisfaction. As a father and husband, he gave up his family. His families played the role stipulated by the social procedures and did the same and stereotyped things every day. In the end, he abandoned his wife and chose Ata, who can bring spiritual comfort to himself. In short, Strickland enshrined his responsibilities to his family, his obligations to society, and his careful consideration of the future on the spirit. All the fetters were broken on the way to search the spirit. Through all Strickland's life, he made efforts to be a spiritual seeker, and paid no attention on material and power. His difficult exploration reflects the exploration under the atmosphere of Western society at that time. It was a desire to return to the origin of human nature. The spirit could make great difference on him, such as supporting him to get rid of and poor. With the influence of spirit, he could live in his own world. In order to keep this world forever, he must pursue freedom.

On the other hand, if one met up with great bondage, he would have strong desire to pursue the freedom. The conclusion could be made from Strickland's escape from the bondage of marriage and love. For Strickland, marriage is a siege and love is bondage, so he must escape for obtaining the freedom. He wanted to flung off the chains of marriage. The marriage did not bring him peace of life, but the boring repetition. There were three women in Strickland's life. The first woman in his life was Mrs. Strickland, who obsessed with assembly life and longed for a place in London society that was secular and noisy. The life with Mrs. Strickland restrained him. When Strickland abandoned his wife, his heart was already extremely hard. The second woman in his life was Blanche Stroeve, who was his friend's wife. He betrayed the trust of his friends mercilessly. However, Strickland offered nothing to her. A man in love would desire to protect his partner, but Strickland was a selfish person, even never hid his selfishness. He had the impudence to satisfy his whim. For him, Blanche Stroeve was only a model for painting, or a springboard on the road to his dream. The third woman in his wife was Ata, who lived

in the unpolluted Tahiti. She was simple and pure. Ata provided him with all the external conditions, satisfied all Strickland's demands for women and never disturbed him. She provided food, house, and children, but never broke into his spiritual world. The love with Ata was free, without any fetters. All in all, Strickland treated marriage and love with contempt, as the narrator said, "I could not believe that Strickland had fallen in love with Blanche Stroeve. I did not believe him capable of love" (169; ch.30) As for Strickland, the love was weakness. In short, the concept of love varies from person to person, but Strickland only fall in love in his own way. As a matter of fact, Strickland also had desires, but he hated desires strongly. He looked forward to the time when he shall be free from all desires. His definition of love was "I know lust that is normal and healthy. Love is a disease." (215; ch.41) He regarded women as tools for pleasure. When narrator asked him why he wanted to hurt a woman who loved him with all her heart, He said that he doesn't want love. He even viewed that he had no time for love.

2.2 The Way for the Pursuit of Freedom

In order to pursue the freedom, Strickland made efforts to explore an environment without constraint. Strickland experienced two environmental changes. It was not difficult to see the difference from Maugham's description of the two cities. Strickland had completed his first free turn from London to Paris. Social events in London were always arranged in rooms full of friends, and life in London was like a never-ending formality, with gentlemen and wives shuttling between parties. They played their settled and boring role. The contact of each one was also full of estrangement. Just as the author described, they met with indifference. However, Paris, the capital of the art, is the place that he can get rid of the dullness of London. In some degree, Paris opened a window to Strickland with its free art. The second turn from Paris to Tahiti, where Marseille was another stop for the art wish to Strickland. We could see the miserable life of Strickland in Marseille from captain Nichol's mouth briefly. As the largest port city in France, it was still possible to discover the cultural significance of Marseille which also connected the West to the East. What's more, when he run away the restrained world, he also tried his best to explore a free world, which was the second goal while pursuing freedom. There was no doubt that Marseille became an important step towards freedom for Strickland. As an island, it had not yet been invaded by the western cultures. It was also regarded as a peaceful and free place by westerners. That place became the ending for Strickland to discover himself naturally. This small island in the South Pacific, which is full of primitive, mysterious, ancient, and heterogeneous factors, inspired all the creative inspiration of Strickland. So it's normal to become the final destination of Strickland's freedom trip. When he was in Paris, Strickland had sketched out an ideal

setting for his life : "Sometimes I've thought of an island lost in a boundless sea, where I could live in some hidden valley, among strange trees, in silence." (119; ch.21) There he could find what he wants. The old Tahiti, as he had imagined before, provided the best way for his art and even the whole life. Tahiti's mysterious atmosphere and ancient customs freed him from the suffering. At the same time, he could pursue his freedom with pleasure. He found a home where passion and inspiration were free.

Chapter Three the Pursuit of Dream

Dream is a bridge, which can guide you to the shore of success. Everyone must have dreams, no matter great or small, and they will make efforts to pursue it. Keeping a dream is already a success and a glory. In the pursuit of dreams, everyone is growing. It is a responsibility for the future and life. If the person does not have a dream, he will suffer from spiritual emptiness. Life without a dream is like a plane losing its navigation, and it will eventually be eliminated by society. At the same time, if there is no dream, you will be like someone who lives in the desolate Gobi, cold and cheerless. As matter of fact, if you converge the dream, the pursuit and the goal will ensue. A man's life is perfect and wonderful when he struggles for his dreams.

3.1 The Reasons for the Pursuit of Dream

On the one hand, Strickland wanted to find out the goal of life. Strickland's life in London is mediocre, doing regular things every day. There are no ups and downs in life, and there is no goal in life. Strickland was an average family in the middle class. The goal accentuated the importance to the success to Strickland. If someone had no goal in life, it won't be difficult for him to make it. Dream was a momentous way to find out the goal of life. Strickland regarded dream as one of his goal in life, so he made efforts to pursue it.

On the other hand, he was longing for art. For the first half of his life, Strickland longed to surpass bounds and create unparalleled works of art. While longing for art, he resolutely pursued his dream. In fact, Strickland was a lonely person until his death. Maugham believed that a writer is an outsider, an orphan of art, and an enemy of society, just like Ibsen. This also applies to painters. Strickland's pursuit of art seemed like bad luck. When he decided to paint, what he abandoned were not only all worldly factors such as family, wealth, and status, but also he. To be honest, life and works were linked. Artists created works through life and created their own lives through works. When Strickland finally created his own world in Tahiti, it proved that art still can be achieved. He was creating art. His artistic achievements were mainly expressed for two times. The first was the nude portrait of Bolangshi. This creation helped him to unlock some kind of magic spell. The second time was that he came

to Tahiti. Inspired by nature, he gained a free experience. Strickland wanted to complete the eternal union of art and nature. It was the longing for art that drove Strickland to pursue his dreams.

3.2 The Ways for the Pursuit of Dream

In order to pursue the dream, Strickland made the choice between the reality and self rationally. Everyone can pursue the dream by getting rid of the fetters of the reality and sticking to you. These realistic things were an important part of the human society. He fled not only from the shackles encountered by individuals, but also the constraints under the rules of the Victorian era. The bourgeois world order was initially established, and the grand blueprint was planned by the "rational era", which was being achieved step by step. The stable ways were controlling people's thoughts and behaviors. It can be said that Strickland's actions were only a symbol of the secular reality. First, this bondage included material bondage. Strickland lived in a very terrible house in Paris, and there was not enough food in it. He was different with the other Britons. Strickland was indifferent to comfortable life. And he did not find it repugnant to live in a dingy room. He had an appetite for food, but had no sense of what he was eating. For him, the food was just to satisfy his hunger. As the author mentioned, he looked upon privation as no hardship. Although his life was mired in dilemma, Strickland had not stopped painting. In front of material constraints, he yielded at no time, but adhere to painting. Second, this bondage included the public opinion. To be honest, the public opinion was something that ordinary people could not endure. In order to pursue his dream, he care nothing of his families. Even if he was criticized by everyone, he still kept indifferent. The author had asked Strickland man some questions, however his brief answer was so scornful that it made the questions seemed absurd. Despite the condemnation of morality and ethics, he resolutely stayed with his friend's wife to complete a painting. Third, the bondage also included fame. Everyone wanted fame. Under the fame, they could feel the feeling of being sought after by everyone, so as to satisfy their vanity. However, Strickland was not such people. More, Strickland didn't send his work to the exhibition. He took no notice of the opinion of the crowd. He only wanted to paint what he saw.

In conclusion, the goal, getting rid of these shackles, had led him to paint and realize his dreams. Only when you get rid of these constraints and follow your heart, can you pursue your dreams without fear. And fortunately, Strickland achieved his dream and kept the goal until he died.

CONCLUSION

This article analyzes the pursuit of Strickland's life. The two pursuits in Strickland's life are freedom and dream. The pursuit of freedom is mainly expressed by the truth that Strickland was free from worldly bondage. The pursuit of dreams is mainly expressed by the truth that Strickland gave up the identity of a securities broker and engaged in painting. Then it elaborates the pursuit of freedom. It mainly studies the reasons and ways on Strickland's pursuit of freedom. There are two reasons, one is the bondage of marriage and the other is Strickland's desire for the spiritual world. The way to pursue freedom was to explore a simple and pure environment. Then the paper talks about the pursuit of dreams. It analyzed the reasons and ways for pursuing the dream. There are two reasons, the first is that Strickland hoped to find the goal of life, the second is that he was devoted to the art. The main way is that Strickland tried his best to break away shackles of reality and insisted on himself.

If you are busy in seeking for the sixpence, you will miss the moon. The moon can represent dreams, freedom, and sixpence can represent reality and secular society. Strickland gave up sixpence on the ground and chose to chase the moon overhead. Eventually the moon lit up his life. All these choices don't have the correct and false judgement standard. In short, as long as we hold on our pursuit and strive for it, everyone's life would be wonderful.

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