

EPIC CHRONOTOPE AND THE ARTIST FIGURE: W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM'S
"THE MOON AND SIXPENCE"

ЕПИК ХРОНОТОП ВА ИЖОДКОР ОБРАЗИ: С. МОЕМНИНГ "ОЙ ВА ЧАҚА"

ЭПИЧЕСКИЙ ХРОНОТОП И ОБРАЗ ХУДОЖНИКА: «ЛУНА И ГРОШ» С.
МОЭМА

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Annotatsiya: Maqola S. Moemning "Oy va chaqa" romanida ijodkor obrazi va epik xronotopning tutashuvini tahlil qiladi. Qahramonning London–Parij–Taiti bo'ylab safari shaxsiy vocation va jamiyat talablari o'rtasidagi ziddiyatni yoritadi. Narrativ masofa va kinoyaviy ohang epik ko'lamni romantik ulug'lashdan saqlaydi.

Kalit so'zlar: epik xronotop, ijodkor obrazi, S. Moem, "Oy va chaqa", safar, qurbonlik, narrativ masofa.

Abstract: The article examines how W. Somerset Maugham's *The Moon and Sixpence* stages the artist figure within an epic chronotope. The protagonist's London–Paris–Tahiti journey frames a conflict between artistic vocation and social obligation. An ironic narrative stance sustains epic scale without romanticizing the hero.

Keywords: epic chronotope, artist figure, W. Somerset Maugham, *The Moon and Sixpence*, journey, sacrifice, narrative distance.

Аннотация: В статье анализируется, как в романе У. С. Моэма «Луна и грош» образ художника разворачивается в эпическом хронотопе. Путь героя Лондон–Париж–Таити выявляет конфликт между призванием и социальным долгом. Ироническая позиция рассказчика поддерживает эпический масштаб без романтизации.

Ключевые слова: эпический хронотоп, образ художника, У. С. Моэм, «Луна и грош», путешествие, жертва, нарративная дистанция.

Introduction. Mapping the Epic Chronotope: Time, Space, and Scale

Maugham miniaturizes epic structures inside a realist novel by stretching the protagonist's life across wide spatial arcs and long, ordeal-filled time. London, Paris, and Tahiti are not simply backdrops; each functions as a chronotopic node where time thickens and moral stakes rise. In London, Strickland's "before-time" is bourgeois clock-time—routine, predictable,

divisible into wages and dinners. Paris suspends that clock: the cramped studio and intermittent hunger dilate time into apprenticeship, making days indistinguishable except for the slow crystallization of style. Tahiti, finally, reconfigures time as ritual and decay—illness, taboo, and the cyclical rhythms of the island—so that artistic purpose is measured not by calendars but by endurance. The epic effect arises from this expansion: one life comes to stand in for a larger historical and ethical itinerary, wherein the question is not just whether art can be made, but what it costs a community to host that making.

2. Journey and Thresholds: From Departure to Exile

The novel is organized around threshold scenes—departures, doorways, docks, letters of renunciation—that “unhouse” the protagonist. Strickland’s flight from London is an inaugural crossing that repudiates domestic identity, wage labor, and social scripts. Paris intensifies the logic of exile: the threshold here is the studio door, beyond which conventional pieties do not apply. Visitors enter expecting the civility of manners and find instead a laboratory of necessity—paint, canvases, poverty. Tahiti adds a colonial threshold: the ship’s gangway becomes a gate into a world where Western norms are at once exported and suspended. Each passage widens the frame, converting a private decision (to paint) into a public disturbance (to reorder relationships and values). Epic narrative typically tests heroes at gates and crossroads; Maugham translates this convention into modern terms by making each crossing a refusal of social debt.

3. The Moral Economy of Sacrifice: Moon vs. Sixpence

The title encodes the central antagonism: absolute purpose (“moon”) against everyday coin (“sixpence”). In London, the sixpence dominates—security, marriage, reputation—but appears spiritually bankrupt to Strickland. In Paris, coin and moon coexist in antagonism; he accepts starvation and squalor as the “price” of art, with friends and patrons treated as fungible means. In Tahiti, money loses even symbolic authority; the economy becomes bodily (illness) and mythic (taboo), and the price of painting is transmogrified into the erosion of the self. The novel refuses a simple moral verdict: Strickland’s devotion yields images that compel respect, yet his ethics toward others remain desolate. Maugham thus frames sacrifice not as a noble offering but as a ledger with entries on both sides—achievement set against injury, vision against wreckage. The epic elevation of purpose is constantly counterweighted by human costs.

4. Narrative Optics and Irony: The Anti-Heroic Epic

The narrator’s poise—observant, skeptical, occasionally caustic—prevents the text from collapsing into hagiography. He records miracles of vision without granting them plenary absolution. Several strategies sustain this anti-heroic epic:

Mediated witness: We rarely inhabit Strickland’s interiority directly; instead, we see him refracted through encounters and testimonies. The chorus of onlookers—friends, dealers, islanders—functions like an epic “witness band,” but their accounts never harmonize into myth.

Materiality of art-making: Detailed attention to canvases, technique, and physical hardship grounds the sublime in labor, turning inspiration into work rather than revelation.

Controlled deflation: Moments that might inflate into legend (visionary breakthroughs, decisive insults to convention) are narrated in a pared, almost clinical tone, keeping grandeur under erasure.

Together these tactics create an “ironic epic”: large scale and grave stakes, yet narrated with an instrument tuned against exaltation.

5. Gender, Instrumentality, and the Ethics of Relation

The novel's most ethically volatile pages concern Strickland's relations with women. They are alternately muses, caretakers, patrons, or casualties of his vocation. By showing how the artist converts intimacy into fuel, Maugham exposes the parasitic edges of genius: affect is extracted, then discarded. This is not a side plot; it is the very theater where the cost of the moon is counted. The epic test thus shifts from dragons and wars to promises broken and dependents harmed—a domesticated battlefield no less consequential for being private. The narrative's refusal to sentimentalize this damage is part of its critical modernity.

6. Colonial Edge: Tahiti as Myth and Limit

Tahiti's dual function is crucial. It supplies mythic air—lush nature, taboo, the aura of origin—that would traditionally consecrate the artist's final canvases. Yet it simultaneously marks the limit of Western fantasies: disease, cultural misunderstanding, and the final erasure of the work. By staging the last act within a colonial margin, Maugham complicates the epic's centripetal pull toward consecration. The island is not a temple but a perimeter where the artist's autonomy collides with other lifeworlds. The grandeur of achievement is inseparable from the violence of extraction—of care, of place, of story.

7. The Anti-Monumental Ending: Creation, Effacement, Afterlife

Classical epics culminate in monument—cities founded, names inscribed. Here, the culminating murals are destroyed. This anti-monumental turn refuses both market consecration and pious preservation. It is Strickland's final assertion that the value of art is not dependent on posterity's archive. Paradoxically, destruction becomes a last aesthetic act, a sealing of intent. For readers, the effect is twofold: the artist's fate is elevated to myth (art so pure it disdains survival) and simultaneously returned to dust (no work endures, only the story of its vanishing). The epic gesture is thus folded into negation, sharpening the novel's ethical ambiguity.

8. Synthesis: Fate as Negotiation

Across these movements, *The Moon and Sixpence* frames the artist's fate as a negotiation rather than a teleology. Epic scope emerges—journey, ordeal, sacrifice—but heroism is held under scrutiny. The chronotope amplifies consequences: altering one life perturbs several worlds (domestic, bohemian, colonial). By coupling scale with irony, Maugham lets readers feel the gravitational pull of absolute vocation while keeping visible the orbits it disturbs. The “moon” shines, but its light is cold; the “sixpence” clinks, but its smallness keeps others fed. The novel's achievement is to hold these truths together without dissolving either.

Conclusion. Read through the lens of the epic chronotope, *The Moon and Sixpence* converts a private vocation into a large-scale itinerary of departure, ordeal, and sacrifice. London, Paris, and Tahiti operate as epic stations where time thickens and space widens, staging thresholds that strip and remake identity. Yet Maugham pointedly refuses the consolations of heroic myth. The narrator's ironic distance, the materiality of artistic labor, and the chorus of conflicted witnesses all keep grandeur under suspicion. What emerges is an **anti-heroic epic**: fate rises to epic scale while moral judgment remains unresolved.

The novel's moral economy—moon versus sixpence—frames creation as a ledger inscribed on other lives. Strickland's uncompromising pursuit compels aesthetic respect even as it leaves ethical damage in its wake. Tahiti sharpens this ambivalence: the colonial margin offers mythic air and, at once, a limit that exposes Western fantasies of consecration. The anti-

monumental destruction of the murals completes the paradox, asserting an art that disdains posterity while ensuring that only the story of its vanishing survives.

Thus the “artist’s fate” here is not destiny fulfilled but negotiation endured. Maugham gives us epic scope without romantic absolution, a vision of creation whose light is brilliant and cold. The novel’s enduring power lies in holding two truths at once: that absolute vocation can yield singular art, and that its price is paid in a currency the hero does not fully.

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