



PATRIOTISM AS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT CONCEPTS OF MORALITY

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ABSTRACT. This article analyzes moral concepts such as patriotism and nationalism, the actuality of these ethical principles to the present day by interpretation the plot and characters of Somerset Maugham's bestseller "The Unconquered".

Keywords: moral concepts, ethical principles, morality, plot, patriotism, nationalism, setting, interpretation, title.

INTRODUCTION. William Somerset Maugham was an English playwright, novelist and short-story writer. He was one of the well-known writers of his era and still the most prominent one throughout the world who has left deep imprint on the hearts and minds of every reader whenever has read his literary creations. The reason of this is very simple. All his works are unique and in each of them the author shows his unrepeatable, specific, clear and unadorned style, cosmopolitan settings and a shrewd understanding of human nature as well as unique ways of presenting moral concepts and principles that are eternal for humanity. For instance: he wrote so many fictions and managed to be successful in each one. Almost every work in his literary heritage such as "Of Human Bondage", "The Moon and Sixpence", "Rain", "Footprints in the Jungle", "The Magician" or "The Unconquered" is considered to be a bestseller. It is obvious that any novel or short story of Somerset Maugham can be on the target of literary investigation. But our attention has been drawn to his short story "The Unconquered", because the feeling of patriotism, which is sacred to each of us, is sung in it skillfully. This feeling is so strongly described in the work because it was written during World War II and it was a claim of the author to all suppressed nations who tried to fight against fascism. The short story vividly depicts the atmosphere of that period.



LITERATURE REVIEW. “The Unconquered” was written in 1943 and included in the collection of Maugham’s stories “Creatures of Circumstance” in 1947. ¹ Its setting is conquered France during World War II. In occupied France during the Second World War, two German soldiers stationed at [Soissons](#) ask the way at a nearby farm; they get drunk on the farmer's wine and one of them, Hans, rapes Annette, the farmer's daughter.

Later Hans, enjoying his life in the area, visits the farm to show there is no ill-feeling. He continues to visit whenever he can and, bringing much-needed food gets on friendly terms with the farmer and his wife. Annette is defiantly opposed to Hans.

On one visit she tells him she is pregnant. Hans, realizing he loves Annette, has plans to marry her and take over the farm; the farmer and his wife, who have no son to inherit the farm, consent to the idea. But Annette says, *"I hate him. I hate his vanity and arrogance.... I think I should die happy if I could find a way to wound him as he's wounded me."* The farmer says, *"We've been defeated and we must accept the consequences. We've got to make the best arrangement we can with the conquerors."*²

Soon after the birth, Hans arrives at the farm. He cries, *"Oh, my God, I'm so happy.... I want to see Annette."* But Annette is not there; she has drowned the baby in a nearby brook.

Maugham always opts unusual way of telling stories and may be it is the main reason why his stories and works seem to be very close to a real life. Thusly, “The Unconquered” is one of examples of this style. Maybe, hence this short story also got an enormous success. The story was adapted for television in 1970 by James Saunders, starring Michael Pennington as Hans, Caroline Mortimer as Annette and Jack Woolgar and Sheila Burrell as Monsieur and Madame Perrier. In 2007, it was adapted by Torben Betts as a stage play, also under the title “The Unconquered”. ³

Moreover, a number of scientists and literary critics learned the story and its background to analyze. Amy Tikkanen studied Maugham’s works and remarked the unique

¹[wikipedia.uz](#)

²[wikipedia.uz](#)

³[wikipedia.uz](#)



sides of his writing: "His work is skepticism about the extent of man's innate goodness and intelligence; it is that gives his work its astringent cynism."⁴

Khrystyna Semeryn, PhD student in Philology National University of Ostroh Academy, analyzed the story according to "The International, The Gender, The Sexual and The Infant's Context".⁵

Ulanskaya Ann tried to give summary for this story after she had read this unusual piece of literature. She claimed that Maugham's special ambiguity was seen clearer in this story because it was impossible to understand who was right and who was wrong; who acted more horrible, the blind drunk German soldier committed violation of a young girl or that girl killed the innocent child.⁶

Analysis. The analysis of this article are intended to the interpretation of the concept of patriotism, one of the most vital principles of ethics, because in the short story this concept is described with highly artistic skill. Patriotism is a very broad notion which plays a crucial role in every person's life who loves his or her Homeland. Various definitions and explanations were given to this concept. Below we have referred to the most acceptable ones.

Patriotism is the feeling of love, devotion, and sense of attachment to one's country. This attachment can be a combination of many different feelings, language relating to one's own homeland, including ethnic, cultural, political or historical aspects. It encompasses a set of concepts closely related to [nationalism](#) and mostly [civic nationalism](#).⁷ The most well-known and sacred principle for every person is patriotism. It is a moral concept that expresses a person's love for his homeland, his desire to preserve it. It is

⁴ Encyclopedia Britannica. (updated: Dec 12, 2021). Novels & Short stories section.

⁵ Accents and Paradoxes of Modern Philology. Journal. Vol.1 No.4 (2019) 109-119-pages.

⁶ studymode.com

⁷ Harvey Chisick (2005-02-10). [Historical Dictionary of the Enlightenment](#). ISBN 9780810865488. Retrieved 2013-11-03.

[^] ["Nationalism \(Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy\)"](#). Plato.stanford.edu. Retrieved 2013-11-03.

[^] ["Patriotism \(Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy\)"](#). Plato.stanford.edu. Retrieved 2013-11-03.



often interpreted only as a spiritual-enlightenment weapon against the enemies of the motherland. In fact, the scope of this principle is much wider; it is a relatively defined form of humanity. It is, first and foremost, a struggle to preserve the freedom of its compatriots, a line of actions for human freedom. Defense of the fatherland is equalized to protection of the people as well as protection of the nation.⁸

DISCUSSION. In this story, Maugham demonstrates a great sense of Patriotism with the help of an ordinary French girl Annette who did not want to obey invaders who had conquered her Homeland and tortured her nation. The astute reader can guess the plot of the work from the title of the story because a clue seems to be in the title. The writer had chosen the title tactically.⁹ Annette resembles France or more broadly all victims of violence. Her body is violated, her emotions are tampered with, and she is desperate for food. However, more important than her body, health, even life itself is her integrity. She is unconquered with entirely of herself and acts faithfully as an unconquered piece of France.

Hans resembles occupation of Germans and their ruthless motions. That's true the Germans managed to occupy France at the end, but could not destroy patriotic feelings of the French.

Annette is one of those French, she never wanted Hans and she considered that the people who came to occupy his motherland are also an enemy of her and her family. She did not want to accept anything from him even the food that was stolen from themselves:

"- Listen, miss. I'm not a bad fellow. I will bring you a cheese, and I think I can get hold of a bit of ham", - said Hans.

- I do not want your presents. I will starve before I touch the food you swine have stolen from us".¹⁰

After about 10 days Hans came unceremoniously as before and brought some food, cheese for Annette's family. Annette considered accepting those presents as a betrayal towards her country even when her parents acceded:

⁸ Sher A. Axloqshunoslik. O'zbekiston faylasuflarimilliy jamiyatining ashriyoti. Toshkent-2010, -B.270-274.

⁹ [goodreads.com](https://www.goodreads.com)

¹⁰ Maugham, W. S. (1955). The complete Short Stories of W. Somerset Maugham, Vol.I. London: William Heinemann Ltd.



“ – I have brought you a present, - Hans undid the package he had with him and set out a sizable piece of Gruyere cheese, a piece of pork, and a couple of tins of sardines. ...- I’m sorry we had a misunderstanding the first time I came here. But you shouldn’t have interfered.

At that time the girl came in. – What are you doing here?- she cried harshly. Then her eyes fell on the things he had brought. She swept them together and flung them at him. – Take them away. Take them.

But her mother sprang forward. – Annette, you’re crazy. ...It’s our own food that they’ve stolen from us.

- I won’t take his presents, - replied Annette”.¹¹

However, she could not fight alone, she knew this, but did not want to be defeated and still tried to resist with her integrity. Although she refused Hans’s help and presents, she would be compelled to accept or eat. After knowing Annette’s pregnancy, Hans began to come often which made Annette more angry. Hans declared his love, shared his feelings and dreams about their child, but these attempts were in vain. She never wanted to give a birth by a German soldier, her and her motherland’s enemy. She knew that she could not look into the eyes of her compatriots:

“– Even if there were nothing else do you think I could ever forget that you are a German and I’m a Frenchwoman? If you weren’t a stupid as only a German can be you’d see that that child must be a reproach to me as long as I live. Do you think I have no friends? How could I ever look them in the face with the child I had with a German soldier? - Annette cried”.¹²

She would not like to comply to enemies, as she relied on independence of France one day. She thought that there was a sense of patriotism in the soul of every French, there was a chance to be free. She described her dreams, beliefs about her country to a German soldier without any fear and called him as an enemy:

¹¹ Maugham, W. S. (1955). The complete Short Stories of W. Somerset Maugham, Vol.I. London: William Heinemann Ltd.

¹² Maugham, W. S. (1955). The complete Short Stories of W. Somerset Maugham, Vol.I. London: William Heinemann Ltd.



*"- ... You're my enemy and you will always be my enemy. I only live to see the deliverance of France. It will come, perhaps not next year or the year after , perhaps not for thirty years, but it'll come. ... I hate you and I hate this child that you've given me."*¹³

She even did not want her own child because of the fact that he was from a German, her enemy. It is impossible for a mother to abandon her child, but unlike others Annette managed to do so.¹⁴

"- I've done what I had to do. I took it down to the brook and held it under water till it was dead".¹⁵

She did so and felt independent and loyal resident of her country, France. There are two contrary views on analyzing the character Annette. As a mother of innocent child she is so grim and tyrant, because the baby was sinless. It does not mean that he will be invader if his father was so. If Annette brings him up with a sense of nationalism, he may be a defender of his motherland. She is totally wrong in terms of killing such an innocent baby.

Nevertheless, when we look at another side, as a child of a selfless country her acts, her attempts are commendable. She fights against invaders in spite of her loneliness, her weakness, her defeat. She killed her enemy even though he was her own child.

It is fact that France achieved its independency after years because of people who were unconquered like Annette. This event was Annette's dream, so Annette was not conqueror at the end.¹⁶

CONCLUSION. Indeed, the works reflecting the love of the homeland and the courageous struggle against its enemies occupy a worthy place not only in the literature of that nation, but also among the masterpieces of world literature. Because they reflect the concepts that are sacred to every reader, such as patriotism and nationalism, it will not

¹³Maugham, W. S. (1955). The Complete Short Stories of W. Somerset Maugham, Vol.I. London: William Heinemann Ltd.

¹⁴Movaghati, Ute Anna. (2016). What goes around, Comes around: The Manifestation of Peripeteia in Maugham's The Unconquered. International Journal of Comparative Literature & Translation Studies, 4, 4, pp. 57-59.

¹⁵ Maugham, W. S. (1955). The complete Short Stories of W. Somerset Maugham, Vol.I. London: William Heinemann Ltd.

¹⁶Movaghati, Ute Anna. (2016). What goes around, Comes around: The Manifestation of Peripeteia in Maugham's The Unconquered. International Journal of Comparative Literature & Translation Studies, 4, 4, pp. 57-59



leave indifferent any soul who loves his country and nation. "The Unconquered" is not a big novel, it is just a short story of approximately twenty five pages, but the essence of the work does not lag behind any large-scale novel trilogy, as it is clear from the title that the short story is devoted to patriotism of Frenchwoman which symbolizes the whole nation. Somerset Maugham's short story is of great importance in cultivating a sense of patriotism in our youth today, teaching them to understand the meaning of the Homeland, explaining that patriotism is a highly moral concept.

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