

An Analysis of the Female Characters in the Moon and Sixpence from the Perspective of Freud's Theory of Personality Structure

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Abstract: Somerset Maugham is one of the most influential writers in the history of 20th-century English literature. His novel *The Moon and Sixpence* has attracted widespread attention and praise since its publication in 1919. This paper intends to analyze the two female characters Mrs. Strickland and Blanche Stroeve in the novel from the perspective of Freud's theory of personality structure. Mrs. Strickland's id is forced to be suppressed by her ego in the face of existential dilemmas and eventually completes a profound transformation from a marginalized housewife to a successful career woman guided by her ego and superego. In contrast, Blanche Stroeve's id goes through the process from being repressed by her ego which is a virtuous wife under social norms to rebellion, culminating in self-destruction under the weight of unbearable guilt in her superego. Thus, it can be seen that their experiences vividly embody the constant conflict and interaction among the id, ego and superego and that the imbalance of the personality structure may lead to tragedy, revealing the inner trajectory of their personality development, which is conducive to deepening the readers' understanding of the female figure.

1. Introduction

William Somerset Maugham (1874-1965) is one of the most influential writers in the history of 20th-century English literature. Born in Paris, France, he had a tough childhood: his parents died before he was ten, and he was sent back to England to be raised by his uncle. His experiences at the Canterbury Royal Public School, where he was bullied due to his stature and stammer, profoundly shaped his detached observational perspective and distinctive aesthetic. In his early years, Maugham studied at St Thomas' Hospital in London (1892-1897), and this medical training cultivated his sharp eye for dissecting human nature. After abandoning his medical pursuits, he authored classic novels such as *Of Human Bondage* (1915) and *The Painted Veil* (1925). As a successful dramatist, Maugham achieved significant recognition in British theatre with more than 30 of his plays, including *The Circle* (1921), running in the four major theaters in the West End of London simultaneously. Elected as a Member of the Royal Society of Literature in 1954, Maugham

is known for his perfect integration of modernist narrative techniques and the critical spirit of realism. He is credited with developing the Maugham-style narrative, distinguished by his calm and restrained writing style with a deep insight into human nature, and his works are full of existentialist-style questions about life and philosophical reflections on moral dilemmas. Those unique literary features have made his works an important model for the study of the transformation of modernity in 20th-century literature, and they are still the subject of sustained attention in the fields of comparative literature, narrative and psychoanalysis criticism, etc.

The Moon and Sixpence, a full-length novel (1919) by Maugham inspired by the life of French post-impressionist painter Gauguin, tells the story of Charles Strickland, a London stockbroker who suddenly abandons his family, career, and social standing in middle age, and moves from Paris to Tahiti in pursuit of his painting ideals through the perspective of “I”. The novel explores the conflict between artistic genius and worldly morality with extreme character choices while centering on Strickland with several subtle and vivid secondary characters. Among them, Mrs. Strickland, the abandoned middle-class housewife, moves from elegance to social shrewdness, and eventually rebuilds her life as a model widow, while Blanche Stroeve goes from docile wife to Strickland’s lover, and ultimately becomes unbalanced in the internal conflict between her desires and moral pressure, leading to the self-destruction. The very different stories of these two female characters not only drive the narrative tension but also reflect the complexity and diversity of the characters’ personalities. Therefore, analyzing the personality structure of the female characters can help readers more deeply understand the unique charm of the novel.

2. Literature Review

Since its publication, *The Moon and Sixpence* has been a literary sensation and has received the attention of readers around the world, making it of great value for research. Scholarly analysis of this novel can be broadly divided into three main perspectives.

The first perspective focuses on feminism. Zhao Hui (2022) analyzes the three female characters of the novel and she believes that their value and existence have been neglected and women have turned into men’s subordinates^[17]. Liu Qingyang (2017) and Yan Jingjing (2024) both analyze the three female characters in the novel and explore the causes of Maugham’s view of women. But the former explores the ways and causes of Maugham’s portrayal of female characters in terms of the family of origin, Phallocentrism and prejudice against women^[9], while the latter argues that Maugham’s view of women is limited by social environment and personal experiences, but his later works have explored women’s self-worth^[12].

The second perspective focuses on the analysis of narrative techniques in the novel. From the standpoint of modernist narrative techniques, Luo Moubai (2016) points out that although it is in the realist style, the use of psychological time, space narrative and limited point of view in *The Moon and Sixpence* are all in line with modernist narrative techniques^[10]. Starting from the structure of the spatial narrative, Zhang Si (2019) deeply analyzes the influence of material, social, and psychological space on the fate of the protagonist, and argues that the multiple spaces endow the protagonist with the internal drive of self-finding^[16]. Feng Lei (2019) focuses on the interpretation of the narrative features, in which she argues that the narrator “I” has a distinct perspective, nuanced non-dualistic oppositions, and stark contrasts of character choices, which reflect Maugham’s profound insights into human nature and his superb narrative technique^[6]. According to Makiko Nakai (2003), the novel integrates multiple narratives through an unreliable narrator “I”, making Strickland’s image vague and legendary, which demonstrates the process from ordinary story to myth, highlighting the unique charm of Maugham’s narrative art^[4].

The third perspective focuses mainly on character analysis, mostly using psychoanalysis to

interpret the protagonist Strickland. In this regard, Yuan Yiying (2021) adopts the theory to interpret the contradictions in the characters' personalities. Through her analysis, she eventually concludes that individuals should have a comprehensive understanding of the diversity of personality^[15]. Tian Shengyu (2021) and Li Xin (2020) also use Freud's psychoanalysis to interpret Strickland. However, while the former focuses more on emphasizing Strickland's realization of the balance among id, ego, and superego in Tahiti, and finding the meaning of life and art^[5], the latter highlights the conflict between Strickland's various personality dimensions in the process of spiritual exploration^[8]. Although Yang Huimin (2015) also analyzes the protagonist's shift from ego-dominance to id-dominance to superego-dominance, she points out the limitations of the theory and emphasizes that people should pursue self-actualization in the balance of personality structure^[13]. Zheng Yuying (2017) arrives at a very different conclusion, what Strickland's journey from London to Paris and ultimately to Tahiti traces is a reverse psychological progression from superego to id^[18].

In summary, scholarly analysis of *The Moon and Sixpence* has achieved fruitful results from various dimensions such as feminism and narrative techniques, especially in the field of character analysis like the perspective of psychoanalysis. However, previous studies on the novel focus on the transformation of the male protagonist's personality from the perspective of Freud's theory of personality structure. In light of this, this paper centers on the two female characters Mrs. Strickland and Blanche Stroeve and analyzes their ids, egos and superegos in depth, with the goal of deepening the understanding of their complex personalities.

3. Theoretical Framework

Sigmund Freud is the founder of the school of psychoanalysis and is recognized as the greatest psychologist of the 20th century. The theory of personality structure is one of the key components of psychoanalysis. In the late 19th century, Freud created the theory of personality structure and then he further elaborated on his theory of personality in *The Ego and the Id*. The theory of personality structure can be divided into three parts: id, ego and superego. In the early developmental stages of psychoanalysis, Freud divided psychological life into conscious and unconscious. Consciousness is the psychological structure associated with the external world, and unconscious is the vague sensations that are not realized. Influenced by the content of the psychological structure, Freud in his later years divided the theory of personality structure into the id, the ego, and the superego.

The id refers to the unknown, unconscious, irrational and instinctual part of people's minds. It is the most instinctive and primitive structure of psychological activity and is governed by the principle of pleasure. "The id of course knows no judgments of value: no good and evil, no morality. The quantitative factor, which is intimately linked to the pleasure principle, dominates all its processes" (Freud, 1965:74)^[1]. The id is not shifted or changed by anything or anyone's will. When a person's heart is dominated by the id, he or she will pursue pleasure by any means necessary. At this time, he or she is governed by his or her instincts and indulges his or her desires, even going against morality and ignoring realistic conditions. Early on, Freud categorized the id into two types: one is ego instincts such as hunger and thirst and the other is sexual instincts. In turn, in the later stages of development of the personality structure, he divided the id into the instinct of life and the instinct of death. The id is the foundation of the personality structure and it plays a cornerstone role in the development of the ego and superego.

The ego refers to the psychological incidents controlled by the conscious and is formed and developed from the id. "For the ego, perception plays the part which in the id falls to instinct" (Freud, 1991:364)^[2]. The ego represents what is most rational and realistic. It constantly imposes

external influences on the id, endeavoring to replace the id's principle of unrestricted, erotic pleasure with the principle of reality. However, this does not mean that the ego and the id are incompatible. The objective conditions brought about by real life are restrictive, and the desires of the id are satisfied when the real conditions allow them, and conversely, the desires are suppressed or denied. Obviously, the ego is rational. On the one hand, it satisfies the needs of the id, and on the other hand, it wants to prevent illegal and immoral behavior.

The superego refers to the existence of a grade in the ego, a differentiation within the ego, which can also be called ego ideal. It occupies the highest level in the structure of the personality and is the noblest part of a person's mental activity because it is influenced by morality. The superego governs the ego in the form of a conscience or subconscious guilt. The formation of the superego reflects the moral standard of society, in line with the higher nature of the human being as desired by society in all respects. According to Freud (1991), he defines that the ego is mainly the representative of the outside world and reality^[2]. The superego is the representative of the inner world and the representative of the id. The superego is closely related to the ego, and the superego can influence the ego by replacing the id and thus the superego is far less conscious than the ego. Under the influence of the ego, one is bound by the conditions of reality, whereas the superego transforms the moral norms of society into internal morality to bind the ego.

4. Mrs. Strickland's Personality Structure

In the novel *The Moon and Sixpence*, Mrs. Strickland (Amy) is the first wife of the protagonist, Charles Strickland. She came from a very typical middle-class family and her father worked as a civil servant in India. After her father retired, the young Mrs. Strickland lived a quiet life in the countryside and travelled to Eastbourne for some time each August. It was here that the 20-year-old Mrs. Strickland met Strickland, and together they played tennis and wandered freely along the seafront. Over time, Mrs. Strickland fell in love with Strickland and chose to start a family with him, raising two lovely children. After seventeen years of marriage, Strickland abandoned her mercilessly in pursuit of his painting ambitions. The weak housewife, who had always depended on her husband, had to go out to earn a living and take on the burden of the family. In the end, she had a successful career and a promising future for her children.

4.1 Id: The Repressed Desires of Love and Hate

According to Freud (1991), the id is the most primitive part of the personality, driven by the pleasure principle, which seeks immediate fulfillment of desires. It operates on instinctual needs, such as love and sex^[2]. Mrs. Strickland's id is expressed as a strong emotional attachment to her husband at first. In the novel, she lost her heart to Strickland when she was young and they had spent a carefree time in Eastbourne. Even a week before Strickland's formal proposal, Mrs. Strickland decided that she wanted to spend her life with him. This irrational impulse is characteristic of the id, driven by the pleasure principle. Thereafter, they maintained a devoted marriage for the next seventeen years. On the surface, Mrs. Strickland's id-driven desires are temporarily satisfied through this union. However, in the novel, Strickland is described as dull, wordless, and indifferent to literature. On the contrary, Mrs. Strickland is keen on hosting various literary gatherings, and her face shows a look of embarrassment when her unsociable husband is mentioned. Obviously, Mrs. Strickland's fulfillment is based on her husband's passive compliance rather than on a two-way emotional engagement. Therefore, the true emotional needs of her id are largely ignored and repressed.

When Strickland suddenly announced his departure, Mrs. Strickland's first reaction, controlled by her id, was not to think rationally, but instead to subconsciously assume that it was Strickland

who had become infatuated with another woman. She was jealous and adamantly opposed a divorce. “‘I’ll never divorce him,’ she answered with a sudden violence...I think she added this to explain her attitude to me, but I thought it was due to a very natural jealousy rather than to maternal solicitude” (Maugham, 2005:24)^[3]. This jealous rage is a direct response to the frustration of her id. Mrs. Strickland’s loving desire for Strickland even allowed her to forgive his betrayal, and she could prepare to overlook her suspicions and pretend that nothing had happened as long as her husband was willing to return to the family. And it exposes the strong desire of her id for emotional connection once again. The id makes her subconsciously seek the pleasure that her husband brings her when he is there (Yuan, 2021)^[15]. Yet, despite Mrs. Strickland’s suffering and pleas, Strickland abandoned her coldly. Even after “I” had conveyed Mrs. Strickland’s misery to him, Strickland said in a cold tone that it was none of his business and that he did not love Mrs. Strickland at all. At this point, Mrs. Strickland’s id remains unfulfilled.

Then she discovered that Strickland, the object of her desires, had not been momentarily bewitched by another woman, but had permanently left her in pursuit of his ideals. Freud describes a kind of psychic energy in the id that can be shifted or displaced in *The Ego and the Id*. This energy can reinforce instincts and change their nature, like turning love into hate (qtd in Wang, 1992)^[11]. In the id, this energy that can be transferred is still governed by the pleasure principle. Due to the rapid reactivity of the id and its adherence to the pleasure principle, whenever an object triggers a feeling of pain, the object may be quickly transformed into an object of intense hatred by an individual. This is a necessary process to avoid the accumulation of energy and thus facilitate its release. Consequently, love can also be converted into hate. In the novel, Strickland’s actions undoubtedly trigger a dramatic re-channeling in Mrs. Strickland’s internal psychic energy. The emotional attachment that was once placed in her husband collapses under the weight of his utter rejection, which in turn transforms into a destructive resentment. She once said: “I never knew it was possible to hate anyone as much as I hate him...I should like him to die miserable, poor, and starving, without a friend” (Maugham, 2005:39)^[3]. At this moment, her id manifests itself in resentment and anger toward her husband.

However, the reality of the dilemma soon prevented Mrs. Strickland from indulging in resentment. The family had lost its breadwinner, but there were still two children to feed. The pressure of survival forced Mrs. Strickland’s ego to take over and she had to repress the id which is dominated by the emotion of hatred, and adapt to society actively. She disguised her husband’s departure as an elopement with another woman and acted with deep pity in front of outsiders in order to gain the sympathy of others, which was beneficial to her business. But in occasional conversations, her repressed id could be glimpsed. When “I” mentioned her husband again, Mrs. Strickland endeavored to look as if nothing had happened, saying that she had never inquired and that perhaps he was dead. This paradoxical reaction reveals the persistence of the repressed id.

In conclusion, Mrs. Strickland’s id is consistently repressed throughout the whole novel. Her husband’s emotional absence and ultimate abandonment create an impossible situation in which her primal desires for love, sexual fulfillment, and emotional connection find no outlet. It can be seen that the desires of love and hate in the id are repressed.

4.2 Ego: Decent Survival of the Middle-Class Woman

“The ego is merely the part of the id modified by the influence of the perceptual system, the representative in the mind of the real external world” (Freud, 1991:367)^[2]. Freud believes that the ego is a differentiated part of the id that exists at the junction of the consciousness and subconscious, and plays a regulatory and balancing role in the personality. Simply put, the ego attempts to satisfy an individual’s needs and desires in a socially acceptable manner and helps the individual adapt to

his or her environment and make rational judgments and decisions. In *The Moon and Sixpence*, Mrs. Strickland presents a complete picture of how a middle-class woman can maintain survival and decency under the influence of her ego. Born into a middle-class family in the Victorian era, Mrs. Strickland has enjoyed a privileged and comfortable life since she was a child. While other girls from ordinary families needed to worry about making ends meet and their future, she could comfortably read books borrowed from Mudie's Library and freely fantasize about romantic stories. This class privilege shapes her ego, leading her to recognize and internalize the importance of a decent life for survival. Although her husband Strickland's reticence does not fully satisfy her desire for deep emotional connection in her id, his status as a stockbroker guarantees her a decent life that meets the standards of her ego. This reality-oriented ego has enabled Mrs. Strickland to maintain a seventeen-year marriage with Strickland because it has largely satisfied the need for stability and identity of her ego. This is also reflected in Strickland's departure. "The new feeling that the small comforts she was used to were missing gave her a sudden pang. She realized that the old life was gone and done with. It was impossible to keep up our social pretences any longer" (Maugham, 2005:18)^[3]. Mrs. Strickland is acutely aware of the disappearance of tiny comforts, which is the precise reflection of her ego on material reality.

Mrs. Strickland's quest for her realistic ego for a decent life is present throughout the novel. After being abandoned by her husband, and despite her thriving typing career, she was always too ashamed to mention it to anyone and was even incredibly concerned about what people said about it. According to Freud, the ego is governed by the principle of reality, the most rational and prudent part of human mental activity, which guides people to act in accordance with the laws of society. It allows the individual to become the normal person that the society demands (qtd in Yang & Zhu, 2015)^[13]. In the late Victorian era, societal norms dictated that women should primarily focus on raising their children at home, rather than pursuing careers in the public (Liu, 2017)^[9]. Mrs. Strickland's behavior shows how the realistic ego adapts to societal expectations, driving her to conform to the prevailing norms. As a result, she was eager to attend various social events and reminded others that she was of noble birth. This is the realistic ego driving her to validate her identity as a respectable middle-class woman.

"The ego seeks to bring the influence of the external world to bear upon the id and its tendencies, and endeavours to substitute the reality principle for the pleasure principle which reigns unrestrictedly in the id" (Freud, 1991:363)^[2]. In the novel, after the original good life is gone, despite the resentment and anger, the rational and realistic ego quickly dominates Mrs. Strickland, so that she is not overwhelmed by the desire of the id and chooses to take revenge on the male protagonist, but instead, she is trying to actively go out to work to earn money for survival. At this time, Mrs. Strickland had only a few hundred pounds, the furniture left in the house and was forced by the pressure of bringing up two growing children. Instantly, she decided to learn shorthand and typing. Apart from this, Mrs. Strickland gave the children to Mr. and Mrs. MacAndrews to bring up on her behalf and made use of her existing social connections to expand her business. Ultimately, through her intelligence and diligent efforts, the business grew in size and she even opened a firm in Chancery Lane. This is all part of Mrs. Strickland's realistic ego showing great adaptability in the face of an existential crisis.

As demonstrated, Mrs. Strickland is predominantly governed by her realistic ego, which enables her to suppress the impulses of her desiring id and conform to societal expectations, effectively molding herself into what society deems an ordinary woman. It is precisely this heightened pragmatism and rationality that leads the narrator to perceive her as shrewd yet undeniably vain.

4.3 Superego: Adherents of Patriarchal Morality

“It is easy to show that the ego ideal (superego) answers to everything that is expected of the higher nature of man. Religion, morality, and a social sense are the chief elements in the higher side of man” (Freud, 1991:376-377)^[2]. The superego is the most civilized, moral part of the personality, governed by moral principles. Freud emphasized that the superego should be sublime and selfless. This concept is perfectly reflected in Mrs. Strickland’s transformation. In the novel, when Strickland irresponsibly abandoned the family and no longer gave any support to the children, who were not yet grown. Mrs. Strickland took on the responsibility of a mother on her own. She went from being a full-time housewife to a great mother, working hard alone to raise her children to adulthood, giving them the best education she could, and succeeding in educating her son to become a college student at the University of Cambridge. This is undoubtedly a noble act that transcends personal interests and reflects a strong sense of morality and responsibility. During the Victorian era, the moral expectation of women in British society was that a good woman would only ever belong to a man. In the theory of personality structure, the superego internalizes social morality into personal ethics, serving as the moral ego (qtd in Huang, 2020)^[7]. Mrs. Strickland’s superego internalizes the social morality about women’s chastity for men as self-morality. Therefore, she never remarried in order to achieve a decent social status more easily, but instead relied mainly on personal endeavors to improve her living conditions.

Mrs. Strickland’s moral superego is also reflected in the wife’s moral responsibility to her husband. In the novel, when “I” told Mrs. Strickland about her husband, she was prompted by her moral superego to help her potentially destitute husband, even though she still harbored a grudge against him. “She hesitated a minute. ‘If he’s in any real want I’m prepared to help him a little. I’d send you a certain sum of money, and you could give it him gradually, as he needed it’” (Maugham, 2005:42)^[3]. This act of returning good for evil is proof that Mrs. Strickland’s moral superego transcends the impulse of revenge of the id and self-interest.

However, Mrs. Strickland’s superego is rooted in a patriarchal society. This enables the internalization of the moral exploitation of women by men. As for Mrs. Strickland, her superego compels her to be a devoted mother, but at the same time, she is also trapped in a perpetual cycle of self-sacrifice for her children due to the absence of paternal responsibility within the family. This seemingly “noble” dedication is an example of how patriarchy unilaterally shifts the burden of childcare onto women. Similarly, Mrs. Strickland’s chastity for her husband is one of the manifestations of the moral exploitation of women within a patriarchal framework. The normalized morality of patriarchy obscures the inequality in power structures between men and women. Maugham portrays Mrs. Strickland as an ideal mother devoted to her family and a faithful wife who maintains her chastity for her husband. This singular and idealized representation of femininity ultimately reinforces the restrictions and repression of female personality within the realm of the superego, reducing the originally complex and diverse nature of women’s personalities to a simplistic moral model. Such a tendency is undoubtedly a manifestation of Phallocentrism and transforms structural oppression into romanticized feminine virtues (Showalter, 2023)^[14]. In Maugham’s view, the perfect woman should be the one who dedicates her life without complaint (Yan, 2024)^[12]. This both reflects Maugham’s conceptual limitations at that time and highlights how patriarchal society further restricts and circumscribes the development of the female personality through moral domestication.

In conclusion, Mrs. Strickland’s superego is primarily manifested in her steadfast adherence to societal morals and her profound sense of social responsibility towards her family. But this superego embodies the exploitation of women in a patriarchal society.

5. Blanche Stroeve's Personality Structure

Blanche Stroeve is Dirk Stroeve's wife and Dirk is Strickland's painter friend in Paris. Blanche is calm, introverted and reticent. She has a natural and decent demeanour. Blanche had been a governess in a Roman noble family but had an affair with one of the young masters. She became pregnant out of wedlock but was driven away by the noble family. When she was desperate to end her life, she was saved by Dirk, with whom she married. The Stroeve family was living happily and peacefully but the arrival of Strickland broke it all. When Blanche took close care of the sick Strickland, she gradually fell in love with him and chose to give up her family and became his lover. Eventually, Strickland's artistic passion for her ran out and he ruthlessly abandoned her, and the desperate Blanche once again chose to end her life.

5.1 Id: From Repression to Rebellion

The id is the earliest and most primitive part of the personality, the repository of biological impulses and desires (Freud, 1991)^[2]. The id completely disregards social norms and unconsciously follows instant pleasure and the fulfillment of physical desires. In Blanche's case, her id manifests itself primarily as passion and eros for Strickland. It is very obvious that she goes through the process of repression of her id, awakening, and then rebellion. In *The Moon and Sixpence*, at first, Blanche worked as a governess in an aristocratic family but had an incestuous affair with her student and became pregnant out of wedlock. This is the embodiment that the id dominates, and the id of desire follows the primal sexual impulse and makes Blanche forget the social identity of a teacher and indulge in cheating with her student. Yet when Dirk saved her life and Blanche became his wife, the id of this primal desire was repressed. She accepted a loveless marriage and played the role of a good wife, as societal norms dictated. When "I" met Blanche for the first time as an onlooker, "I" was keenly aware that there was a secret hidden in her calmness and introspection, which aroused the narrator's interest. That secret is Blanche's desire for passion suppressed by the ego.

"The id contains the passions, in contrast to the ego, which represents what may be called reason and common sense" (Freud, 1991:364)^[3]. In the novel, the arrival of Strickland breaks the suppression of Blanche's id by the ego. The pure form of Strickland's id which is the abandonment of social identity and the pursuit of primitive artistic impulses, appeals to Blanche's repressed id. The desire for passion in her id is reawakened by the Strickland. The ego senses the id's desire for Strickland and immediately resists the id that is about to lose control. Hence, at first, Blanche refused adamantly to let the sick Strickland stay in their home. However, in the process of taking close care of Strickland, the grip of Blanche's ego on the id gradually diminishes. The novel describes a time when Blanche was mending the Strickland's clothes and they inadvertently locked eyes, and Blanche's look was strangely confused at first. Strickland immediately averted his eyes, but Blanche kept watching him with a look on her face that was harder to explain. It was at that moment that Blanche could no longer contain her lust for Strickland. Eventually, she became Maynard, the embodiment of lust. Freud has analogized the relationship between the id and the ego with the relationship between the rider and the horse, "The horse supplies the locomotive energy, while the rider has the privilege of deciding on the goal. But only too often there arises between the ego and the id the not precisely ideal situation of the rider being obliged to guide the horse along the path by which it itself wants to go" (Freud, 1965:77)^[1]. Blanche's id and ego are also in this non-ideal state, as her eros for Strickland overwhelms the ego. It also means the complete awakening of the id.

The long-suppressed id now awakens and immediately rebels against the ego, much like a coiled spring. Blanche resolutely abandoned her social identity as Mrs. Stroeve, which the ego represented,

disregarding years of marriage and became Strickland's lover. This behavior exemplifies the id, driven by the instinct of love and lust since Blanche seeks to satisfy immediate desires without considering the consequences. The further rebellion of the id against the ego is reflected in the fact that Blanche volunteered to be a nude model for Strickland's paintings, transforming her body into a symbol of lust. The complete exposure of one's flesh declares the rebellion of the id against the norms of civilized society, under which one must appear bright and polished. This behavior fully unleashes the instincts and returns to the primitive.

In short, Blanche's id is repressed by the ego after experiencing death and identity transformation. And the arrival of Strickland brings Blanche's id back to dominance. The awakened id, after a long period of repression, rebels against the ego and returns completely to its primal instincts.

5.2 Ego: The Virtuous Wife under Social Norms

In Freud's (1991) theory of personality structure, the ego is the product of strict adherence to social norms and possesses the ability to integrate normative rational thought and action^[2]. In the novel, when Blanche was abandoned by her student and wanted to jump into the river to commit suicide, it was Dirk who saved her. Thereafter, instead of wallowing in her failed romance, Blanche begged Dirk to take her from Rome to France in order to start a new life. This reflects the ego's rational judgment of reality. After marrying Dirk in France, Blanche's ego follows the social norms more strongly and tries to play the social role of Mrs. Stroeve. Always being gentle, quiet, and dignified, Blanche quietly supported her husband's painting career. They were not rich, with only a drawing room, a bedroom, and a very small kitchen, but Blanche would take care of all the housework. While Dirk painted, she would go to the market to buy groceries, make lunches, do needlework to subsidize the household, and not be idle all day long. All of this is the ego for Blanche to follow the social norms that make her a good wife in the secular sense.

Blanche's normative ego is also evident in the fact that after becoming Strickland's lover, she still tried her best to run their life with meticulous planning. After becoming Strickland's lover, Blanche's ego is still trying to pull their life back on track so that their life is living like a normal couple under the norms of society. She followed the pattern of her former life at the Stroeve's, going to the market as usual and keeping daily accounts in order to make their life manageable for a longer period. But Strickland was very dismissive of this, arguing that Blanche was pulling off those tricks that belonged to his wife Mrs. Strickland little by little. In fact, Blanche's behavior doesn't repeat an old trick simply, but a defense mechanism adopted by the ego copes with internal conflicts and external pressures, in an attempt to find some form of stability and order in a relationship that is not fully accepted by society.

All in all, Blanche is constantly driven by her normative ego to fulfill the social role of being a wife. This vividly demonstrates how a woman's ego constantly shapes and constrains her behavior under the stringent social norms of Victorian England. Even when facing drastic life changes, the ego still struggles to maintain a normal facade. Her experience demonstrates profoundly how the ego guides one to fit into societal norms in effort.

5.3 Superego: Unbearable Guilt and the Path to Destruction

According to Freud (1991), the main components of the superego are moral norms, the individual's conscience, and the ideals of the ego, etc. "The domination of the superego over the ego manifests in the form of conscience or perhaps of an unconscious sense of guilt" (Freud, 1991:374)^[2]. Blanche's superego then manifests itself primarily in the condemnation of personal conscience towards the ego and a sense of guilt. In the novel, when Blanche decided to abandon

Dirk and became Strickland's lover, despite her outward show of indifference, complex emotions were welling up in her heart, which is a manifestation of her guilt superego.

Blanche's attitude toward Dirk is not simply ruthless because in the face of her husband's humble and sincere entreaties to stay, a nameless rage burned in her heart. And as Dirk knelt, Blanche ordered him to stand up and subsequently slapped him. In essence, it's a projection of guilt inspired by Blanche's superego. She knew that she had betrayed her marriage and hurt a kind man. Dirk's noble superego like a mirror reflects the immorality of her behavior more clearly, which further strengthens her inner guilt and anxiety. This strong sense of guilt makes it impossible for her to face Dirk unashamedly, and she can only cover up her inner waves through indifference and even anger, which is a kind of defense mechanism, trying to alleviate the great psychological pressure brought by the superego.

Blanche's eventual tragic end is also largely a result of her guilt-ridden superego. After being abandoned by Strickland, she chose to commit suicide by swallowing oxalic acid and refused to see Dirk on her deathbed. It isn't just because of the broken love, but the guilt she feels inside reaches an unbearable level. The weight of her conscience, condemning her for betraying Dirk, bears down on her like a heavy burden. She knows that she can't go back to Dirk with a clear conscience. "The ego gives itself up because it feels itself hated and persecuted by the superego, instead of loved" (Freud, 1991:400)^[2]. It is the harsh judgment of the superego that robs Blanche of the courage and hope to continue living. As the novel suggests, "A woman can forgive a man for the harm he does her, but she can never forgive him for the sacrifices he makes on her account" (Maugham, 2005:98)^[3]. This insightful statement aptly confirms the decisive influence of Blanche's guilty superego on her fate. Instead of alleviating her guilt, Dirk's sacrifice becomes the final straw that breaks her back.

Blanche's story deeply reveals how the superego internalized by individuals under strict moral norms has a great psychological impact on individuals. Especially after violating moral standards, the guilt inspired by the superego is enough to destroy the individual's mind, ultimately leading to a tragedy.

6. Conclusion

This paper reveals Mrs. Strickland and Blanche Stroeve's complex and profound inner psychological worlds by applying Freud's theory of personality structure in *The Moon and Sixpence*. Their experiences vividly exemplify the ongoing conflict, negotiation, and interplay among the id, ego, and superego. Mrs. Strickland's psychological structure mainly shows how a strong ego suppresses the primitive desires of the id in order to survive and maintain social decency under the pressure of reality. The desire for love of her id is chronically frustrated by her husband's emotional absence and eventual abandonment, and then her energy is transformed into resentment but is ultimately suppressed by the ego in the face of the need for survival. Her ego follows the principle of reality and demonstrates a strong adaptability that transforms her from an abandoned housewife to a successful career woman. At the same time, her moral superego is reflected in a strong sense of maternal responsibility and the internalization of social morality, but this also reflects, to some extent, the moral discipline and expectations of patriarchal society for women. Unlike Mrs. Strickland, Blanche Stroeve's experience highlights how the impulsive power of the id breaks through the constraints of the social norm and how the superego ultimately brings about devastating consequences. Her long-suppressed passions are awakened by Strickland at the level of her id, leading her to recklessly turn her back on her marriage, following her primal desires. Although her ego still tries to maintain order and normality in her new relationship, it is ultimately unable to resist the drive of her id. However, when the passion burns out and she is once again abandoned, the

intense guilt generated by her superego overwhelms the ego, which ultimately leads to the tragedy of self-destruction.

In short, the portrayal of the two female characters, Mrs. Strickland and Blanche, profoundly confirms Freud's theory of personality structure. They demonstrate the drive of the id, the adaptation of the ego, and the regulating power of the superego in very different ways in their respective social and life situations. Through this interpretation, the readers can understand women's psychological motivation behind their behaviors, and the inner struggles and destiny in a particular era more clearly. Blanche's eventual tragedy also warns readers that imbalances within the personality, especially the irreconcilable superego guilt, can lead to devastating results, reminding us of the importance of maintaining a balanced personality and psychological well-being while pursuing the liberation of individuality.

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