

THE OEDIPAL OVERTONES IN D.H.LAWRENCE'S *SONS AND LOVERS*

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ABSTRACT

D.H. Lawrence used Freudian theories and might have given Paul Morel an Oedipus complex. The writer himself experienced such feeling in his life. Lawrence's theory of life as it should be lived was strongly influenced by the works of Freud. Indeed, it is not too much to say that Freud formed it. It was from Freud that it derived its two dominant principles – first, that the sources of human conduct, thought and feeling are in unconscious. Secondly, those sources are predominantly sexual in character. D.H. Lawrence examines the effects of the overwhelming affection of a mother on the mature years of her sons. Gertrude Morel, mother of Paul, was not happy with her family life; she hates her husband Walter Morel. So, she shifts her affection on her sons – William, Paul and Arthur. At the beginning, she had a passion for her first son William. When he died of disease, she takes to Arthur. He joined in the army and settled there. Finally, the affection of Gertrude falls on Paul who lives with his mother. Because of his deepest love for his mother, Paul did not marry anybody. This misplaced affection led Paul to mental suffering at the end.

D.H. Lawrence was one of the major novelists of the twentieth century English tradition of novel writing. He was an important but controversial writer of contemporary times. The most important element of his writing apart from the innovations he brought to the English novel is his own philosophy concerning sex.

D.H. Lawrence made the important contribution to the form of the English novel by bringing new subject matter and by giving the reader instantaneous observation, slackening the puppet strings usually held by the author. Like the Russians, he subordinates the plot to life. He is really interested in the workings of the elemental life impulse and in showing how the unconscious vital forces control the conscious life. His characters move and compel because he makes us instantaneously share their hours in the miner's cottage, in the factory, and in the farm.

All the novels of Lawrence are more or less autobiographical. But *Sons and Lovers* is almost a carbon copy of the author's life. The principal characters of the novel and the central situations are drawn from Lawrence's early life. Like Paul Morel's father, Lawrence's father was a miner, uncultured and drunk. Like Paul's mother, Lawrence's mother was her husband's direct opposite. A triangular relation-

ship grew between Lawrence, Jessie and his mother and that become the theme of *Sons and Lovers* which remains the most compelling account of the Oedipus complex in Literature.

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Oedipus and *Sons and lovers* are different story. But it resembles the illegal affair between son and mother. In *Oedipus*, the king, the love is quite accidental because they do not know that they are mother and son. But still Oedipus is seduced by his mother thus creating the Oedipus complex. In *Sons and Lovers*, Mrs. Morel takes her sons into her maternal fold and prevents her son developing any kind of emotional attachment with any other woman. The sons William and Paul have a strong and deep affection for their mother, which is not only uncommon but also unnatural and abnormal.

Right from his boyhood, Paul unconsciously resorts to illness to draw his mother to himself. William never practices such indecent strategies. When Paul takes ill, his mother lies with him on the same bed locking him in a tight embrace. This act invariably restores him to health. Paul plays this trick unconsciously in his youth. He catches pneumonia and is bed ridden. He raves that he is going to dies. Mrs. Morel is alarmed. She holds him in her arms to assuage his fear. This is D.H. Lawrence's euphemism for the son having sex with his mother. This unprecedented experience cures Paul and at the same time relieves Mrs. Morel of her tension.

When Paul is a young boy, she accepts the flowers which he brings her like a woman accepting a love token. On the day Paul goes for interview at Jordon, she is gay with him like a sweet heart and when they walk through the streets of Nottingham, they feel the excitement of lovers having an adventure together. He does everything for her. His mother is his intimate friend and confident.

In order to keep Paul to herself, Mrs. Morel sabotages all his love affairs. She objects to Paul's first romance with Miriam who leads a lonely life with her parents and brothers on the neighbouring farm. At first, Paul avoids her, but later Paul is too fascinated. But he feels shy of personal intimacy with her. He returns home very late in the night because he was wandering with Miriam. Mrs. Morel is enraged.

She cautions him that Miriam will suck out his soul. To appease his mother, he kisses her and fondles her. When he does this, he completely forgets Miriam. When Miriam touches him later, he resents the

touch. Thus, Paul is torn between his mother and Miriam, Paul tries to approach Miriam through his art and as a teacher. Both are really self-defensive.

Normally, when a boy grows into an adult, he will maintain a distance between him and his mother. But Paul is abnormal; he confuses his mother's love with sexual desire. His mother also misused her son's affection for her sexual pleasure. She did not allow any of her sons to marry because she thought that marriage would separate them from her. In this sense, she is also an abnormal mother. .

In Paul's case, the abnormal fixation upon the mother is met and enhanced by Mrs. Morel abnormally concentrated on her son. Her love which can no longer go towards her husband turns to Paul for consolation. She makes him love her too well. Paul is hemmed in on all sides by too much love and too much hate. As a result, he cannot expand towards the universe in normal activity and form an independent sex interest because for him, his mother has become the universe. She stands between him and his life. There is a kind of bottom less childishness about him. His projected ideal is life in a pretty house with his mother. Paul never makes the mature sexual decision away from his mother, as he can never accomplish the physical and emotional transfer.

When Gertrude died, Paul also wants to die because he feels his soul cannot live without his mother and hence he longs to join her in death. In the end, he realizes that man is all alone and must find a way through the labyrinth of life and he turns towards the city with a sense of hope that work would finally give him peace of mind.

Lawrence examines the effects of the overwhelming affection of a mother on the mature years of her sons. Gertrude Morel, mother of Paul, was not happy with her family life; she hates her husband Walter Morel. So she shifts her affection on her sons – William, Paul and Arthur. At the beginning, she had a passion for her first son William. When he died of disease, she takes to Arthur. He joined in the army and settled there. Finally, the affection of Gertrude falls on Paul who lives with his mother. Because of his deepest love for his mother, Paul did not marry anybody. This misplaced affection led Paul to mental suffering at the end.

The attraction of young boys for their mother is known as Oedipus complex, which is presented in *Sons and Lovers*. In the novel, the central emphasis is on the conflict between the physical world and elemental man. The ending is ambiguous but most readers would agree that it is optimistic rather than pessimistic.

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