

Oedipus Complex in Sons and Lovers.

The term Oedipus Complex has been derived from the name of Theban hero of ancient Greek legend, who, in ignorance, slew his father, married his mother and had children by her. Oedipus Complex may be defined as

“the desire, most readily expressed in sexual terms, of a son for his mother with a consequential rivalry between the son and the father.”

It is a “complex” which may appear later in life as seeking a mother-image in relations with other women. Lawrence, by introducing this “complex” into English fiction, not only enlarged its horizons, but also opened up new vistas in the field of fiction. He also gave a new psychological depth to the manipulation of such an intricate theme. Sons and Lovers explains the subtle nuances of Oedipus Complex. That is why it has been described as the first Freudian novel in English.

It is now a well recognized fact that Oedipus Complex was the most momentous personal experience of Lawrence. Like Goethe and Rousseau, he also regarded novel-writing as a sort of confession to liberate himself from the suffocating experiences of his life. The Oedipus Complex forms the central core not only in Sons and Lovers but also in the history of Lawrence's life. It was, as a matter of fact, a constant obsession with him and tormented him even after

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"caused something momentous to take place in her soul and she remembered the scene all her life, as one in which she had suffered most intensely."

Mrs. Morel starts seeking emotional satisfaction through her eldest son, William. William also responds to her extraordinary affection; "almost like a lover." Mrs. Morel is highly possessive and cannot tolerate William dancing with girls. When William falls in love with a passionate girl, Gyp, Mrs. Morel disapproves of the relationship. William finds himself unable to cope with the seemingly absurd and rebelled attitude of his mother. However, he cannot oppose his mother, but the unhealthy attachment to the mother ruins him mentally. He falls a prey to periods of psychosis and finally dies.

In the second

part of the novel, Paul has been shown as the victim of Oedipus-Complex. Paul is born into an atmosphere of parental conflict. Mrs. Morel's life has already turned out to be a complete fiasco. She dreads the birth of the third child, conceived unwillingly out of a loveless relation. When Paul, the third child is born, she lavishes all her love and affection on him with a view to making up to him for the injury or sin committed by her in the form of giving birth to him. She feels as if

"the naval string that had connected its frail body with hers had not been broken."

And she receives, in return, all that she has missed in her shattered love for her husband. Paul loves his mother like

the death of his mother. He rid himself of that obsession only by giving a concrete shape to it in his novel. The Pen with which "Lawrence" wrote this novel was certainly dipped in his own blood. As "Graham Hough" observes:

"It is a catharsis, achieved by re-living an actual experience.... re-living it over and over again."

Sons and Lovers deals with the Sons and Lovers deals with the theme of psychological relationship between a newly married husband and his wife, a kind of duel of sexes, where, in Lawrence's own words,

"the conflict of love and hate goes on.... till at last it reaches some sort of conclusion and they transcend into some condition of blessedness."

In the very first chapter of the novel, "Lawrence" presents emotional dissatisfaction between Walter Morel and Gertrude Morel. Before marriage, they were in love with each other, but after marriage Mrs. Morel sees the wide gulf between her husband and herself. The love between the two is on decline after the birth of their child:

"There were many stages in the ebbing of her love for him, but it was always ebbing."

Mr. Morel cuts off one year old William's curls which;

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“ And I shall never meet the right
woman while you live.”

This shows that Paul has now come to realize the abnoocious attachment to his mother and he wants to take refuge in the heart of a girl who is of his age. Paul is almost unaware that his relationship with his mother is not entirely a matter of sexless affection - he is at times a phantom husband.

Thus, Oedipus Complex is one of the most momentous autobiographical data to which Sons and Lovers is devoted. It has a structure strictly controlled by the idea of an organic disturbance in the relationship of men and women - a disturbance of sexual unfulfilment that is seen first in the dissatisfaction of mother and father, then in the mother's attempt to substitute her son's unsuccessful struggle to establish natural manhood.

a lover and whenever he watches her, his heart contracts with the pain of love. Paul, during convalescence, liken to

"sleep with his mother and snuggles up to her; Paul lay against her and slept and got better."

When Mrs. Morel gets to know about Paul's intimacy with Miriam, her jealousy is stirred and she prevents him from meeting her. In fact, the theme of mother's hostility to Paul's love for Miriam is explicit from the very start as Mrs. Morel sees that

"If Miriam could win her son's sex sympathy, there would be nothing left to her."

Paul has, in fact, an unbreakable bond with his mother and whenever he thinks of his mother, all other things, even the image of Miriam, fades into insignificance:

"There was one place in the world, that stood solid and didn't melt into unreality, the place where his mother was."

It is this strange love for his mother which ultimately brings about an estrangement between him and Miriam. The unhealthy attachment with the mother, which claims to possess him, completely prevents him from enjoying sex. And finally when he enjoys physical consummation with Clara, he is told by his mother that he has not met "the right woman."
Paul quips :-