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RECEPTION OF THE NOVEL “SONS AND LOVERS” BY D.H. LAWRENCE IN LITERARY CRITICISM

In the article the novel “Sons and Lovers” by British writer D.H. Lawrence is analyzed. The novel was published in 1913 and was ambiguously perceived by contemporaries. Till 1915 contemporaries and literary critics paid attention to the images of Morel’s family and marked the great difference between Paul’s parents who belonged to different social classes: the mother was from middle class and the father belonged to working class. Education problems were also mentioned by the critics. Since 1915 after the publication of Freud’s writings, critics have considered “Sons and Lovers” to be a confirmation of Freud’s theory of the oedipal complex. The reason for such a conclusion was based on exaggerated mother’s love to her sons – William and Paul. Gertrude Morel was not happy in her marriage, felt that her life was in vain. All her ambitions she tried to pass to her sons. The elder one died because of pneumonia and all concentration was fixed on the younger one Paul. Mother’s excessive love made it impossible for Paul to get married as Paul’s girls were considered inappropriate by his mother. Later he decided not to marry and spend his whole life with mother. However, mother’s death became a great tragedy for a man who was not independent and did not know how to live alone. After Freud’s publications contemporaries saw the traits of Oedipus complex in the novel. The wife of Lawrence Frieda, a German by birth, an admirer of Freud wrote about it in her letters. In the future, critics referred to her letters, which noted that it was through Frieda that Lawrence became acquainted with the teachings of Freud. Many critics also noted the personal problems of the relationship between Lawrence and his parents became the object of study for the author himself through the novel. In attempting to understand the relationship between his parents and the reason for their failed marriage Lawrence pointed to many social problems of his generation.

Key words: criticism, Freud’s teachings, Oedipus complex, Lawrence.

Formulation of the problem. D.H. Lawrence in his literary works tried to reveal the problems that are common to different cultures and peoples. The novel “Sons and Lovers” attracted special attention after Freud’s publications on the Oedipus complex. Many contemporaries perceived the novel as a reflection of the theory based on a literary work. The author had his own point of view concerning this problem. The comparison between author’s and contemporaries’ perception is discussed in the article.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Lawrence’s novel “Sons and Lovers” attracted the attention of modern literary critics. Among the most famous researchers of the writer’s literary heritage are J. Konrad [1], M. Feklin [6], J. Salgado [2] and many others.

Objective. The article traces the peculiarities of the reception of Lawrence’s novel “Sons and Lovers” from the point of view of contemporaries who saw the reflection of Freud’s theory in the novel.

Main material. The novel “Sons and Lovers” was published in 1913 by the British publishing house Duckworth and Co. Many critics agree that the novel

is autobiographical. As H. Salgado rightly noted that “all of Lawrence’s novels are more or less autobiographical in the sense that they tell about the events and emotions of his own life, but “Sons and Lovers” is the most autobiographical even of Lawrence’s novels” [2, p. 12]. The action takes place in the mining village of Nottinghamshire in Lawrence’s homeland in the Morel family “drawn” from the author’s family. The couple has four children – three sons and a daughter. Mrs. Morel turns them against their father, pointing out all the shortcomings of the working class. Subsequently, trying to silence suffering, find justification and meaning of her own life, the woman surrounds her eldest son William, who is her pride with immense love and care. The young man manages to move up the career ladder, he earns well, helps his mother financially and occupies an honorable place among London gentlemen. In his ambition and attraction to the middle class Mrs. Morel sees herself. However, the eldest son dies, the daughter gets married, the youngest goes to serve in the army, and the third child remains – Paul, on whom all the love and affection of the mother is concentrated.

Until 1915 critics noted mostly social problems – the parents' belonging to different social classes, the problems of education at school, and the inability of Paul to build his own life apart from his mother. The problem is studied in the article "The novel "Sons and Lovers" in the assessment of contemporaries (till 1916)" [5].

New interest to the novel arose after the publication of Freud's works on the "Oedipus complex", the essence of which based on a relationship between a parent and a child of the opposite sex. The child feels hatred and jealousy towards the second parent as a potential rival. Starting from 1915, Freudian theory is "confirmed" in every article devoted to the novel "Sons and Lovers". The fact that Freud's teaching was published two years after the publication of the novel was perceived by critics as confirmation of the theory in practice.

Lawrence's wife, Frieda, a German by origin and a fan of Freud's teachings played an important role in that perception. On January 14, 1955, she wrote to Harry T. Moore: "I never told you about young Austrian doctor who worked with Freud and who, together with Freud, revolutionized my life. Through him, and then through me, Lawrence learned about Freud" [2, p. 29]. This letter served as a proof for many researchers (Zhantieva, G. Salgado, etc.) to assume that changes related to Freud's theory were made in the novel under the influence of Frieda. The changes made by Edward Garnett, literary critic and Lawrence's close friend before the publication of the novel are not mentioned.

The influence of Freud's theory on the novel "Sons and Lovers" remains controversial. The "Oedipus complex" was described by the scientist not only in the publications of 1915, but also earlier ("Dream Interpretation" (1900), "On Psychoanalysis" (1910), "Totem and Taboo" (1913). The opinion of the author on this matter is important. He expressed it in a letter to Barbara Lowe dated September 11, 1916: "I hated the Psychoanalytic Review of Sons and Lovers". You know, I think that "complexes" are malicious Freudian half-assertions: something like not seeing the forest for the trees. When you said 'Mutter complex,' you said nothing – no more than if you called hysteria a nervous disease. Hysteria is not nerves, the complex is not just sex: far from it. – My poor book: it was, like art, sincere truth: here they cut out half a lie from it and say: "Voila!" [2, p. 26–27].

Despite Lawrence's "clarifications", contemporaries saw the novel as a confirmation of the theory. Alfred Kuttner in the *New Republic* (April 10, 1915) publishes an article in which he points out Law-

rence's inability to "resolve internal conflicts that are growing to incredible proportions" [2, p. 61]. The critic leads to the fact that the novel reveals the inner world of Lawrence, his heart, his experience. Paul's inability to reciprocate Miriam is explained "solely in terms of the hero's emotional relationship with his parents" [2, p. 62], as "a child's heart is torn between longing for his offended mother and barely restrained hatred for a cruel father" [2, p. 63]. Mrs. Morel pulls away from her husband and demands "fidelity" from her son. "He becomes her confidant and comforter, a quiet, peace-loving child, whose natural initiative is gradually blunted by the burden of this unequal responsibility. Too much preoccupation with the mother makes him effeminate. While most children are already showing their first poetic attempts at marriage in ideal companionship with friends of the opposite sex, the hero only dreams of running away with his mother and living alone with her for the rest of his days" [2, p. 63]. The author considers it "monstrous" that an excess of mother love could be so detrimental to a person. The leitmotif of the novel is hatred for the father and excessive love for the mother. For a deeper understanding of the problems of the novel, the critic suggests getting acquainted with Freud's psychosexual theories, without which the novel remains a mystery. Violations of the "balanced influence of both parents", subsequent neurotic disorders, inability to create a family, fear of sincere female love from Miriam are considered confirmation of Freud's theory in a work of art.

A year later another article by Alfred Kuttner entitled "Freudian Understanding" (1916) was published. The author briefly mentioning the terrible incestuous relationships in the drama "Oedipus" concludes that "Sons and Lovers" is based on "true platitudes" of our emotional life. The critic not only focuses on Freud's theory, but also makes an attempt to understand what is the similarity between the scientist's theory and the problems of the novel. "The struggle of a man trying to free himself from his maternal fidelity and approach a woman outside his family circle" [2, p. 69] seems to A. Kuttner to be a fundamental problem. Comparison of theory and fiction makes it possible to realize "with renewed vigor that fiction, in order to become great art, must be based on human truths" [2, p. 70]. The critic cites fragments of the novel, which describe in detail Paul's attraction to Miriam, her love, her mother's jealousy, which behaves like an "abandoned woman" [p. 75], chiding Paul for spending so much time with a young girl. Kuttner leads to one of the key dialogues, where Paul, trying to justify himself, talks about their entertaining conversations, which causes

only anger and indignation in Mrs. Morel: "Is there really no one else to talk to? .. Yes, I know this very well – I am old. And so I can stand aside; I have nothing more to do with you. You only want me to serve you – the rest is for Miriam". According to Kuttner, this sounds like a bitter rebuke from a wife to her husband. Paul suffers from these words and hates Miriam for it. But Mrs. Morel does not stop there. She makes one last, ruthless reproach.

"And I've never... you know, Paul... I've never had a husband... no... really..."

"Well, I don't love her, mother", he muttered, leaning his head on her shoulder. His mother kissed him with a long, passionate kiss.

– My boy! she said in a voice trembling with passionate love.

Without noticing it himself, he gently stroked her hair" [3, p. 75-76].

The quoted passage is considered a confirmation of the oedipal complex in the novel. Trying to understand the causes of the destructive processes in Paul's mental state, the critic points to the absence of the father's ideal as a standard of masculinity. Sex fears and despises him, as a result of which the child's dependence on the mother persists, since there is no "opposition" capable of separating him from her, and he remains "enslaved to his parental complex" [2, p. 89]. Considering the fact that the novel is autobiographical, Lawrence emerged from the "dark struggle of his own soul as a victorious artist" [2, p. 94], overcoming the problem thanks to art.

Simon Lesser in "Form and Anxiety" (1957) suggested that Lawrence's novel can be compared with Freud's "The Most Common Form of Degradation in Erotic Life" (1912). The critic recommends to read Freud's work, and then "Sons and Lovers", which would enable readers to experience respect for the ability of fiction to touch on those topics that even the scientist was later "forced to recoil in alarm" [2, p. 163].

In the son's excessive attachment to his mother, Lawrence recognized the manifestation of the so-called incest. In a letter to Katherine Mansfield, he wrote: "This mother notion of incest can become an obsession. But it seems to me that there is a lot of truth in this; at certain periods, a man feels a desire to return to the bosom of a woman, seeing in her his goal and justification. He rushes to her womb and she, the Magna Mater, accepts him with satisfaction. It's a kind of incest" [4, p. 119]. Zhantieva believes that the letter cited above is another confirmation of how strongly the idea of the oedipal complex influenced Lawrence" [4, p. 119]. Wang Liu's article ("Oedipus

Complex in Literature works", 2011) traces the oedipus complex in Lawrence's novel, Shakespeare's "Hamlet" and two Chinese novels ("Thunderstorm", "Dream of Red Mansions"). As a proof the author cites the same fragments of the novel, which drew the attention of the writer's contemporaries.

Some critics were sympathetic to the image of the mother in the novel and attempted to justify her. J. Middleton Murray wrote: "Mrs. Morel's message to the children was the most important thing their souls needed. They joined their mother like little protectors; they despised their father. And he realizing that they were right in that they despised him, "denying God in himself," rotted in his loneliness <...> It was inevitable that the starving spirit of the mother sought satisfaction through her sons; and two of them, the elder and the younger, fully responded to her call. <...> She had to live the life that she was deprived of through her sons; they would bring her the spiritual satisfaction she longed for" [2, p. 97–98].

Mark Schorer in his article "Technology as Discovery" identifies two main themes of the novel: the devastating impact of mother's love on the son's emotional development and the split between physical and spiritual love in the relationship between Miriam, Clara and Paul. The author of the article drew attention to the "constant contrast of epithets" characteristic of the novel as a whole – "proud, noble" mother is full of self-satisfaction and aggression, and "small, stupid" father who evokes sympathy for his straightforwardness and kindness: "Lawrence (and Morel) loves his mother, but he also hates her because she forces him to love her; he hates his father, experiencing true Freudian jealousy, but at the same time loves him for integrity. He sympathizes with him, because the father was destroyed by the domination of the mother, like Lawrence-Morel himself" [2, p. 109]. M. Schorer comes to the conclusion that the writer failed to achieve the objectivity of the researcher and "separate" himself from the hero of the book. Lawrence tried to "get rid of his illness through the book" [2, p. 108], but "the disease was not cured, the emotion was not overcome, the novel was not brought to perfection" [2, p. 110–111].

Case Sagar in the afterword to the 1981 edition of the novel writes: "Lawrence conceived the book as a tribute to his mother, a fictitious compensation for her suffering and wasted life. But before the book was published in 1913, he realized that to some extent she was wrong and that the story was distorted to the detriment of his father. An attempt to counteract this imbalance adds another reading to the novel and makes it a direct and truthful description of the

essential paradox of all relations between mother and son. [2, p. 512].

In 1953 Dorothy Van Gent in the article “On Sons and Lovers” notes the chronological organization of the novel, the purpose of which is not only to show “the habits and vicissitudes of a Nottinghamshire miner’s family”, but also to reveal the idea of an organic violation of relations between men and women, a violation of gender polarities, which first manifests itself in the dissatisfaction of the mother and father, then in the attempt of the mother to replace her husband with her sons, and, finally, in the unsuccessful attempt of the sons to acquire natural masculinity” [2, p. 114]. For the first time in criticism the novel is considered in a wider social context. The author of the article proves that the heroes of the novel violated the natural, biological rhythms of a person, which are common to all living beings. This is a “crime against life” [2, p. 114] and is associated with disrespect for human individuality, a perverse desire to possess other people, as Mrs. Morel tries to possess first her husband, then her sons. Lawrence considered this situation a disease of modern society that has turned people into “anonymous economic objects, into military units, or into ideological automata” [2, p. 114]. Only in Mister Morel, “brutalized and spiritually crippled, does the germ of individuality remain intact” [2, p. 120], he consciously submits to the rhythm of life, descending daily into the coal mines and returning “blackened and tired” [2, p. 120]. The work of the miners is a distortion of the natural use of light and darkness, thus personifying “spiritual

violations” [2, p. 120] in the relationship between man and nature. The relationship of children to their father is important. On the one hand, they feel hatred and contempt, reinforced by the “cultural indulgence” of his mother towards him, on the other hand, the sons and even Mrs. Morel cannot but recognize his masculine integrity, natural kindness and simplicity, which is expressed in his dialect, in the way he lights his pipe singing songs, in his dealings with the miners. He possesses that which is broken in his sons by means of “the possessiveness of the mother” [2, p. 121].

Conclusions. The novel “Sons and Lovers” was ambiguously perceived by contemporaries. Since 1915 after the publication of Freud’s writings, critics have considered “Sons and Lovers” to be a confirmation of Freud’s theory of the oedipal complex. The wife of Lawrence Frieda, a German by birth, an admirer of Freud, also wrote about this. In the future, critics referred to her letters, which noted that it was through Frieda that Lawrence became acquainted with the teachings of Freud.

A similar point of view is also shared by D. G. Zhantieva stating that under the influence of his wife Lawrence finished the novel, emphasizing in it “some points that give the impression of an oedipal complex” [4, p. 118]. The personal problem of the relationship between Lawrence and his parents became the object of study for the author himself through the novel. In attempting to understand the relationship between his parents and the reason for their failed marriage Lawrence pointed to many social problems of his generation.

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Єлісеєнко А. П. РЕЦЕПЦІЯ РОМАНУ Д.Г. ЛОУРЕНСА «СИНІ ТА КОХАНЦІ» В ЛІТЕРАТУРОЗНАВСТВІ

У статті аналізується роман британського письменника Д. Г. Лоуренса «Сини та коханці». Роман вийшов у 1913 році і був неоднозначно сприйнятий сучасниками. До 1915 року літературні та сучасники критики звертали увагу на образи родини Морел та відзначали велику різницю між батьками Пола, які належали до різних соціальних класів: мати була з середнього класу, а батько належав до робітничого класу. Критики відмічали й проблеми освіти, які висвітлювалися в романі. Починаючи з 1915 року після публікації творів Фрейд, критики вважали «Сини та коханці» підтвердженням теорії Фрейда про едіповий комплекс. Підставою для такого висновку стала перебільшена любов матері до своїх

синів – Вільяма та Пола. Гертруда Морел не була щаслива в шлюбі та вважала, що її життя пройшло даремно. Усі свої амбіції вона намагалася передати синам. Старший досяг середнього класу, став джентльменом, але помер від пневмонії. Вся любов була зосереджена на молодшому. Через надмірну любов матері Пол не міг одружитися, оскільки його мати вважала, що дівчата, з якими він зустрічався, намагалися полонити його душу, володіти ним повністю. Пізніше він вирішив не одружуватися зовсім і все життя прожити з матір'ю. Однак смерть матері стала великою трагедією для людини, яка не була самотійною і не вмiла жити на самоті. Після публікацій Фрейда сучасники побачили в романі риси едіпового комплексу. Про це писала у своїх листах дружина Лоренса Фріда, німкеня за походженням, шанувальниця Фрейда. Надалі критики посилалися на її листи, в яких зазначалося, що саме через Фріду Лоуренс познайомився з вченням Фрейда. Багато критиків також відзначали особистісні проблеми стосунків між Лоуренсом і його батьками, які стали об'єктом дослідження для самого автора через роман. Намагаючись зрозуміти стосунки своїх батьків і причину їх невдалого шлюбу, Лоуренс вказав на багато соціальних проблем свого покоління.

Ключові слова: критика, вчення Фрейда, едіповий комплекс, Лоуренс.