

Perception of Fantasy and Oedipus Complex in Sacred and Profane Love Machine

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Abstract: Iris Murdoch, a distinguished twentieth century writer, philosopher and critic whose philosophy and novels display her voluminous knowledge about various subjects and her careful observation about political and literary world. One of her interesting novels is *Sacred and Profane Love Machine* for which she has received Whitbread Prize. Murdoch has given a symbolic title *Sacred and Profane Love Machine*, in which, sacred represents Blaise's (male protagonist) devoted wife Harriet and profane, his mistress Emily. She has presented the psychological drama between a husband and the two women in his life. It travels around the dual life of a man with his legitimate family and his illicit love and their illegitimate son. The theme is compelling and explores the subject with maturity rather than insensitivity. This paper presents the Oedipus complex and Fantasy world of different characters in the novel.

Key words: *Fantasy Oedipus complex, Profane, psycho-analysis, sacred, ,opportunistic, illegitimacy*

I. INTRODUCTION

It is the story of a naive and faithful wife and an opportunistic husband who maintains a mistress without the notice of his loyal wife. Though it is a sensuous and emotional story, some incidents in the novel are truly insightful and explicable. Yet, the conclusion of the book is presented in an overly dramatic manner. The word 'machine' in the title indicates its major concern with the mechanical aspects of love which could dominate and destroy people if they are unable to control them. The novel depicts life as it interacts with fantasy from the very beginning. In childhood, the first stirrings of the imagination are brought on by fairy tales and religious stories. These tales develop into an individual's first fantasy. The main characters in this novel live in such fantasies.

INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS

As suggested by the title of the novel, Murdoch proposes that love could become monstrous and debilitating illusion, driving humanity to live life through mechanical monotone that never permits true happiness or satisfaction. The story begins with a small boy of eight or nine years observing a house deeply. In that house Harriet, her husband Blaise and her son David have been living. Harriet and her son David notice the small boy but he suddenly disappears. They are puzzled by his disappearance and are confused whether the boy is a figure of imagination or reality. Murdoch creates some suspense in the course of this description of the boy and through Harriet and David's confusion.

Murdoch presents the emotions and fantasies of the characters through their dreams. David has a strange dream that in the back waters of the sea, an aggressive large blue fish opens its soaking mouth to catch him. But when he observes the fish, it changes into half girl and half tail. Though frightened, he tries to assist himself as a growing young man supported by his family. Harriet, in the other room also has a dream. In that dream, she notices an outlandish shining in the window in the darkness and she is alone in her bedroom.

The respective dreams of David and Harriet suggest their psychological make-up and also suggestive of strange, uncertain future that awaits them. Harriet is a good wife to her husband Blaise, who works in his clinic as a psychoanalyst and treats psychologically disturbed patients. Harriet, on the other hand, patiently listens to her husband's treatment methods and gives her excellent support. Being the husband of Harriett, Blaise feels lucky and proud. He never wants to lose her in his life. Sometimes Harriet hides her gloominess and dissatisfaction, acts as a happy married woman. She imagines her world as the world of idealism. She fantasies herself as an ideal wife, mother, friend and neighbour. The characters in this novel do not exactly appear as rational beings; instead they are driven by egoistic urge. The characters; perceptions of other characters are dependent on, not because of either natures, but on taken fantasy and its estimate.

ECHELON OF OEDIPUS COMPLEX

The house where Blaise lives with his wife Harriet and son David is called 'Hood House' (1) and their adjacent house

is called 'Locketts' (5) in which Monty Small, a popular writer lives alone. Monty's wife Sophie, who had died of cancer, was an ex-actress in Swiss. Monty deeply grieves for his wife. "I have never seen a man mourn so," says Blaise (6). Monty's mother detests Sophie and does not even conceal her satisfaction of Sophie's death. She would perhaps hate any woman Monty might marry. After the demise of Monty's father, his mother instructs him to call her Leonie but not Mom. The Oedipus complex is echoed in the argument: "Something unintelligible and dark entered with this portentous name into the relationship" (24). Monty's mother never accepts Monty to marry any girl. She thinks that Monty is her property and her possession. She doesn't want to share her love with any other. Even she strongly averts mourning of Monty for his wife.

Murdoch explains Oedipus complex through some characters in her novels. Harriet feels that some mothers flirt with their sons and feel young. But Harriet never thinks like that. Edgar is another character who has been dominated by his mother. Murdoch presents Edgar character that is suffered from Oedipus complex, treats his mother as his friend, pacifier and protector, never marries and is alone since his mother's death. Though he admires women and their skills, his love for women is fruitless. After noticing his love for Monty, readers get a doubt that he might be a homo. Despite being a successful classicist, Fellow of the Royal Academy, Edgar is unmarried and is craving for Monty's friendship. Pleased by the sensitivity and sensibility of Harriet, Edgar hankers after Harriet and blames her husband Blaise for his adultery. But he hasn't accepted to give shelter to Harriet when she is really in need. Heather Widdows says, 'Murdoch's novels present a darker picture of human reality, although full of humour in which seeking the good and living the good life almost impossible for most of illusion – redden, egotistical characters: if her philosophy is lofty, her best novels are merciless and grim, as well as comical' (*The Moral Vision of Iris Murdoch*, 7)

Murdoch tells the behavioural changes in various stages of man's life and its efficacy which many of the parents cannot understand. According to their age, children behave differently. But the parents misunderstand the behavioural changes and think that their children are not giving proper response and respect to them. In most of the cases, the parents in general and mothers in particular show over-possessiveness towards their sons, for which the sons struggle in their life. Monty is such a person who hides his real character because of afraid of his mother. As he is a writer, he creates a fictional character Milo, who is an epicurean, cryptic sadist and a cynic. He makes his readers happy by creating Milo character.

II. PHASE OF FANTASY WORLD

Murdoch explains how dissatisfied husbands live in fantasy world imagining themselves as super heroes and great lovers. Blaise also imagines himself as great intellectual and is dissatisfied with his profession and life. He wants to do medicine but unfortunately he couldn't. He wants to get intelligent wife but gets innocent wife. He compensates his desires by maintaining a mistress Emily. Emily is first attracted by his care, concern and adoration. Later she is swindled by Blaise's lies. Emily feels pity about the miserable married life of Blaise and wants to give him a blissful and resourceful married life. Blaise describes Harriet as a dreary and gawky lady who spoils his happiness and his married life. Blaise does not want to lose Emily who is naughty, attractive and educated. As Emily works as a teacher at Merleau-Ponty, Blaise thinks that he need not spend money on her. This thinking reveals the opportunistic attitude of Blaise.

Murdoch portrays Edgar character in a mysterious way. He is easily influenced by the sensitive nature of women and wants to make friendship with them. He admires Sophie and deeply regrets for her illness. After her death, he shows sympathy on Monty and invites him to his native place to forget the memories of Sophie. But Monty dislikes his effeminate qualities and gets jealousy about his adorable actions towards Sophie. Later Edgar is attracted towards kind and friendly attitude of Harriet. He makes friendship with her and invites her to his house in the beginning. He fights with Blaise when he knows about Blaise's mistress and illegal son. He asks Blaise how he has deceived his devoted wife Harriet. But Edgar never helps Harriet when she needs support. The double-cross nature of men is clearly shown through Edgar's character.

Blaise loves his handsome son David and feels proud about his fatherhood. He does not want to lose his faithful wife Harriet and his son David. At the same time he doesn't dare to tell about Emily. With the help of Monty, he has created a fictitious patient Magnus Bowles. He convinces Harriet that Magnus Bowles needs personal care and treatment. Hence, it is his duty to visit Bowles at his home and give treatment throughout the night.

As Harriet is faithful and innocent, she always trusts her husband and along with David she receives him with a great joy when he returns from Magnus Bowles. Emily feels Harriet's belief in her husband is her stupidity. "Harriet monumental calm trust (what Emily called her stupidity) kept the structure up" (63). At first Emily believes the words of Blaise divorcing Harriet and waits for his divorce. But later she understands the timorous and opportunistic attitude of Blaise. She starts threatening her husband that she'll tell their secret marriage to Harriet. Blaise is worried about Emily and his secret and he wants to give full stop to his secret life.

When Blaise thinks how to tell his secret to Harriet, Monty suggests him to write a letter to Harriet 'because in a letter he can use his intelligence' (112). Monty counsels Blaise to live outside his consciousness, an entity which tells him he has two sons and two women to whom he must make an account of his actions. Monty urges Blaise not to divulge anything that may lose him everything, and to bury it under the *moment*. It is the instant that Blaise must act within, before his fantasy life engages itself into the situation and creates another uncontrollable and corrupt desire—such as Blaise's desire later in the novel to have both women share his life equally. Yet, as Monty states, Blaise already believes himself to be something he is not, an emperor in a tragic situation, and as such his life can be settled in the usual ways that literature has sorted out the troubles of royalty. Monty goes on to declare that in the vast scheme of things, Blaise does not exist to any great extent, and this is due as much to Blaise's reliance on concepts and standards of living outside of his own life, as it is to Blaise's mortal impermanence in the world in which he is only able to act and accept consequences, not to divine a new reality in which he is able to undo his actions or have limitless chances to achieve his desires.

III. CREATION OF FICTITIOUS ROLE

Monty again advises Blaise not to tell about Magnum Bowles to Harriet as it is not the correct time and not necessary. Blaise is fretted about his situation and gets angry with Emily who is the main cause for his present situation. At that time he wants to kill Emily than to tell the secret to Harriet. He even doesn't dare to go to Emily's house without the help of Monty.

At first both Blaise and Emily have lived like gods. Emily shows pity on his wife Harriet as he stops loving her and betrays her. Between Blaise and Emily, Luca joined as a new person. Emily wanted to conceive after Blaise had given divorce to his wife Harriet. But it was too late to abort, they reproached each other and Luca entered their life. Emily always asks him to leave his wife and live with them. But Blaise doesn't dare to tell about his secret marriage to Harriet and postpones his decision of telling the truth. Day by day Emily loses her hope and hates Blaise for his fear. She confronts him she would ruin him by telling her story to all. She feels sorry about her pathetic life and jealous about Harriet's luxurious life. Sometimes Blaise also thinks that he is giving a protective and well-settled life to his first family and a deserted penurious life to Emily and his son Luca. He has not paid any attention and care on Luca as he paid on David. When Luca was a small child, he frequently asked why his father was not with them always. Later he stops asking questions but look at Blaise in a distrustful apprehensive way. This makes Blaise unhappy and guilty.

Murdoch presents Harriet as a kind-hearted, composed and faithful woman who forgives her husband for his betrayal.

Murdoch portrays that Harriet's braveness comes from her soldier father and soldier brother. Whenever Harriet excuses him and asks him about Emily he immediately says that he does not love Emily, he bears her because of Luca and he hates her. Murdoch does not write as a 'woman's author'. Nevertheless, it seems that in the case of this particular theme, her sympathies have undergone a change over the years. Though she creates Harriet as a compassionate figure at the beginning, she changes her character in a different way at the end.

IV. PURITY OF LOVE

In an International Journal of Philosophy, Murdoch states, "Harriet, Blaise's good wife, purifies her love through goodness to be able to forgive Blaise for his extramarital affair. Her surfeit of love creates a sisterly feeling for Emily, Blaise's mistress". Later Harriet tells this truth to her son David. As a young person, he cannot tolerate his father's dishonesty, and he is not ready to listen about Emily and her son Luca. He requests his mother to leave Blaise and they both will go to "Italy or somewhere" (133). Though Harriet gives courage to her husband and consoles his son, in her inner heart she is completely depressed and she tries to hold her bravery and patience.

Along with Blaise, Harriet visits Emily and invites both Emily and Luca to her house. Luca likes Hartley's peaceful, merciful and affectionate treatment. With her forgiving nature, Harriet shows superiority over Blaise and Emily which disturbs and enrages Emily. When Edgar blames Blaise and Emily for swindling loyal Harriet, Blaise gets fury on Harriet and pity on Emily. His decision of living with Emily is a big shock to Harriet. With a deserted and depressed mind, Harriet requests Monty to marry her. Monty rejects to marry her. Edgar doesn't help to provide accommodation to her. So Harriet wants to go to her brother with David and Luca. But David cannot accept Luca as his brother and he is not ready to go with his mother along with Luca. Harriet leaves for her brother with Luca without David.

The last incident is a miserable one and not acceptable to the reader. While Harriet and Luca are waiting for their luggage at Hanover airport lounge, she deeply contemplates her flee from Hood House. She laments indignantly having gone away without David. She has only one desire in her mind at that time, that she must escape from Blaise otherwise he will come with a new appeal and she cannot resist. She feels sorry about her drastic situation. She thinks, "Blaise, Monty, Edgar, Magnus all gone, and now David too had an awful just judgment. That too was part of a machine from which she had not, for all her 'feelings' and her 'principles', the spirit or the courage really to escape." (298)

V. DRASTIC TRAGEDY

All of a sudden a dreadful situation occurs in the airport. A stout German who sits beside Harriet is the target to the police. Suddenly some police appear in the door way, someone calls out peremptorily in German which Harriet cannot understand. One police man shoots at the stout man and that corpulent man falls on the ground bleeding copiously. Harriet covers Luca with her body with a shriek. The bullet goes into her body and she immediately falls on earth. Seeing that horrendous scene Luca becomes mute and disabled. Blaise marries Emily, gives her coveted wife status and they come to Hood House. David stays at Locketts.

Harriet is killed unexpectedly by a scattergun terrorist, and her death yields Emily an unpredicted and absolute triumph over her. The readers can notice Emily's rejoice with her latest billet as Blaise's wife, as she and Blaise work "silently, surreptitiously, feverishly, like people trying to conceal a crime, to erase all traces of Harriet's existence" (303). But both David and Luca undergo drastic sorrow by the death of their favourite person, while the former is estranged and the later one goes into stillness by utter shock of watching Harriet's tragic death.

VI. CONCLUSION

Murdoch shapes the character of Monty in a strange way. She presents the picture of Monty's life along with Blaise's life simultaneously. He has created Milo, a character who is an epicurean cryptic sadist, a cynic. Though he has created that character for the enjoyment of his readers, he likes a modest and generous character. Monty sometimes introspects and believes that only to impress his classmates and friends he acts and his friends treated him as an intellectual. He also feels that in this society it is eccentric thing to lose our ego. At the end the readers understand that Monty himself has killed his wife. First reason is, he couldn't bear the empowering, dominant and flirtiest Sophie for a long time. He believes that Sophie flirts with many handsome guys and treats him like a callous husband. But it is superficial and not real. Only to play a hoax, Sophie acts like that.

Second reason is, Monty is unable to see the suffering of Sophie as she has been undergoing treatment for cancer. To reduce the torment of Sophie, Monty has stopped her breath. Though he has killed her, he feels pain internally. Murdoch describes Monty's character in such a way that he is unable to notice the difference between fantasy and reality. Blaise's cunning fantasy gives him a gratifying life and leads to the death of an innocent and adorable wife. Here the judgement is not correct. Though Blaise has felt some tension in his life because of his illegal life, it is short-lived. He is the person who enjoys his life with two women and after the death of Harriet also he enjoys his remaining life with young wife Emily. Readers find no

repentance in Blaise. Emily is happy with her new status though her son becomes mute. Another sufferer is David who has lost his lovable mother and has decided to spend his life in seclusion. Edgar now understands Monty, leaves his immature actions and makes good friendship with Monty.

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