

Malcolm's Oedipus Complex

*The issue of an unsolved Oedipus Complex
in Garden of Shadows by V.C. Andrews*

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Abstract

This essay discusses the Oedipus complex within Malcolm, a character in V.C. Andrews' *Garden of shadows*. The Oedipus complex is defined in the first chapter and in the second and third chapter the essay discusses Malcolm's relationship to women as well as men and how the relationships are connected to his unsolved Oedipus complex. Chapter three is finished by a comparison between Malcolm and the original Oedipus written by Sophocles in 430 B.C. As a conclusion the essay has argued that Malcolm could be called "the modern Oedipus" as he has got a lot of elements that are typical for the Oedipus complex.

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Introduction

V.C. Andrews is a famous writer. She has an individual style of writing, and the reader never stops from being struck with amazement when reading her books. She mixes love stories with the most bizarre family relationships and turns the action around in an instant. In *Garden of Shadows* we get to follow Olivia, who is 24 years old when we first meet her. She wants to get married and when the handsome Malcolm proposes to her she is very happy. Once they arrive at Foxworth Hall Olivia starts noticing there is something that is not right about Malcolm. The more one reads of the book, the more one discovers that he is obsessed with the thought of his mother who abandoned him as a child. He loves his mother as he loves a woman and he hates his father. As in Sophocles' play about Oedipus the king, he wants to be with his mother and he loves her more than anything. Oedipus married his mother, and killed his father which is almost what Malcolm does later on in the book as well.

Malcolm is the Oedipus complex personified and this piece of work will show the reader the elements revealing the complex within Malcolm which he has never succeed in resolving. The theme of this essay is Malcolm's unsolved Oedipus complex which makes him unable to live a normal social life. There will be three chapters. The first chapter will explain the definition of the Oedipus complex. The second chapter shows the reader how Malcolm behaves around women and how his relationship to them is affected by his Oedipus complex. The third and final chapter deals with Malcolm's relationship to men and a comparison to Oedipus the king written by Sophocles.

Autobiographical notes on the author - V. C. Andrews

V.C. Andrews' life and work

Cleo Virginia Andrews was born in Portsmouth on June 6, 1923. As a child she was very intelligent and was allowed to skip the third and the sixth grade.¹ Her favourite subjects were art and literature.² As a seven-year-old she read the whole of the Bible and was sent to junior college art classes. At the age of twelve she had read most of the literature classics.^{3 4} During high school Andrews fell down a staircase which resulted in bone spurs⁵ and later on, arthritis. After several operations, which made things worse, she had to use a wheelchair for the rest of her life.⁶ She started to write at an early age but it was not until she had an agent that her books were published and successful.

Andrews lived her whole life with her mother. Her first novel, a science fiction novel named *The God of the Green Mountain*, was written in 1972, although it was never published. During the following seven years Andrews wrote nine novels and about 20 short stories.⁷ In 1979 her big breakthrough came with *Flowers in the Attic* which became number one on the *New York Times* bestseller list. *Petals on the wind* and *If There Be Thorns* followed shortly afterwards and became bestsellers as well.⁸ After having published seven novels, Andrews had sold over 30 million copies. Her work is considered to be part of the female gothic genre of literature. She mixes incest, sexual jealousy and obsession and makes them unique for her

¹ V. C. Andrews Biography, <http://www.angelfire.com/va3/vcandrewspage/biography.html>, April 14, 2006.

² Forum bokförlag – Författarpresentation, <http://www.forum.se/600/601?aspAuthorId=15645>, April 14, 2006.

³ V. C. Andrews Biography, <http://www.angelfire.com/va3/vcandrewspage/biography.html>, April 14, 2006.

⁴ Forum bokförlag – Författarpresentation, <http://www.forum.se/600/601?aspAuthorId=15645>, April 14, 2006.

⁵ Bone spurs, also called osteophytes, are bony projections that grow along the edges of bone.

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/bone-spurs/DS00627>, September 16, 2006.

⁶ V. C. Andrews Biography, <http://www.angelfire.com/va3/vcandrewspage/biography.html>, April 14, 2006.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Barnes & Noble.com – V. C. Andres – Books: Meet the writers,

<http://www.barnesandnoble.com/writers/writerdetails.asp?z=y&cid=727446>, April 14, 2006.

work.⁹ Andrews herself said: “The face of fear I display in my novels is not the pale spectre from a sunken grave, nor is it the thing that goes bump in the night”.¹⁰

Unfortunately Andrews died of breast cancer at the age of 62,¹¹ but she left a lot of unfinished work and after her death two books were published based on her ideas that she had formed before she died, thereof *Garden of Shadows*.

V.C. Andrews’ style of writing

Andrews was frustrated with the lack of creative satisfaction in her everyday life so she started writing in secret. “Her first manuscript was so autobiographical that she destroyed it in order to keep her life private.”¹² Even though her following pieces of work are less revealing of her private life Andrews admitted that she has used some autobiographical incidents but she never disclosed which pieces. The author also used experiences of her friends, family and her own dreams and memories. It is also said that Andrews was influenced by popular and literary fiction.

Her writing habits were as extraordinary as her stories. She wrote during evening and night time before going to sleep at night which resulted in thirty or forty pages and not going to bed until the early hours of the morning. Because of her illness she often typed when she sat in her bed or standing up encased in a body brace. Sometimes she had a mirror next to her so she could see her own reactions and use them in her writing.¹³

Andrews identified with her characters. When she wrote about four brothers and sisters being kept in an attic (In *Flowers in the Attic*, the book that came after *Garden of Shadows*) With almost nothing to eat she lost weight and when one of the children died she mourned as if it was a very close friend of hers that passed away.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *The unforgettable V. C. Andrews*, <http://wv.essortment.com/vcandrewsvc:rlph.htm>, April 14, 2006.

¹² *The Complete V.C. Andrews*, http://www.completevca.com/bio_bio.shtml, December 8, 2006.

¹³ *The Complete V.C. Andrews*, http://www.completevca.com/bio_triv.shtml, December 8, 2006.

In V.C. Andrews books there are always series, except from one single book, *My Sweet Audrina*. In the others, as well as for *Garden of Shadows* her books follows a pattern. “The first book of a series acts as an introduction to the characters and story, focusing on a young woman struggling on the verge of adulthood. The second, third, and fourth books continue the story through her adult years. [...] Finally, the fifth book, called a prequel, returns to the events which happened before the events of the first book.”¹⁴ In the series about the Dollanganger family that *Garden of Shadows* belongs to, *Garden of Shadows* is the fifth book telling us about Olivia and Malcolm, the parents of Corinne who is marrying Christopher, Malcolm’s half-brother.¹⁵

Andrews has succeeded in catching young women to read her books because of reasons that E.D. Huntley explains as follows:

Andrews's youthful protagonists have experiences that closely mirror the fears of young readers (identity, sexuality, peer acceptance, relationships with parents and other adults); thus, the novels provide readers with a kind of catharsis - a way to expend feelings of fear without actually being in danger. Readers are able to live vicariously through the plights of the identifiable main characters caught between adolescence and adulthood.¹⁶

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ E.D. Huntley, *V.C. Andrews: A Critical Companion*, (Greenwood Press, 1996).

Chapter I – Oedipus complex

This first chapter of the essay will present an explanation of the meaning of the Oedipus complex as well discussing its connection to Sigmund Freud, the person who coined the expression.

1.1 The Oedipus Complex

The Oedipus complex is a term used in psychoanalysis, a method which was founded by Sigmund Freud. The theory has received its name from the old tragedy *Oedipus the King*, written by Sophocles in ancient Greece in 430 B. C. in which Oedipus kills his father and marries his mother. The Oedipus complex is a concept meaning that a child, or a grown up, has an unnatural love to his or her mother which has a sexual foundation. The person wants to eliminate the same-sex parent to get closer to the opposite-sex parent. In *The Ego and the Id* Freud says the following about the Oedipus Complex:

... a male child may be described as follows. At a very early age the little boy develops an object-cathexis for his mother, which originally related to the mother's breast and is the prototype of an object-choice on the anaclitic model; the boy deals with his father by identifying himself with him. For a time these two relationships proceed side by side, until the boy's sexual wishes in regard to his mother become more intense and his father is perceived as an obstacle to them; from this the Oedipus complex originates. His identification with his father then takes on hostile colouring and changes into a wish to get rid of his father in order to take his place with his mother. Henceforward his relation to his father is ambivalent; it seems as if the ambivalence inherent in the identification from the beginning had become manifest. An ambivalent attitude to his father and an object-relation of a solely affectionate kind to his mother make up the content of the simple positive Oedipus complex in a boy.¹⁷

According to Freud, the Oedipus complex discusses the little boy's desire to be with his mother, thereby eliminating the father. This is often most visible when the child is between

¹⁷ Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id* (London: Norton, 1989) 26-27

the age of three to six years old.¹⁸ If a person does not work through his or her Oedipal complex this may result in never leaving this stage. Such persons are immature and cannot get on in life, as they are obsessed by a parent. They also have difficulties with authorities and are often in all sorts of other troubles as well. Even in parenting one's own child it can be difficult if one has not worked through one's own Oedipus complex. The children, and also the grown ups who are still centered in the Oedipus complex, feel guilty for their incestuous desire and murderous impulses.¹⁹ In the work *Totem and Taboo* Freud speaks of the boy's relationship to his father: "The hate which resulted from the rivalry for the mother could not permeate the boy's psychic life without being inhibited; he had to contend with his tenderness and admiration which he had felt for his father in the beginning, so that the child assumed a double or ambivalent attitude towards the father."²⁰ It is possible therefore to see a feeling of ambivalence towards the father within the boy but he is still willing to sacrifice him in order to get closer to the mother, or even take the place of the father.

Females can also suffer from an Oedipal complex. This is called an Electra complex, with a girl wanting to be with her father and therefore desires to get rid of the mother. Freud says: "... in both sexes the relative strength of the masculine and feminine sexual dispositions is what determines whether the outcome of the Oedipus situation shall be an identification with the father or with the mother."²¹ He also meant that a girl's Oedipus complex resolves itself much more slowly, therefore making her more calm in working through her dilemma and it makes the girls consciousness less brittle than the boys.²²

1.2 The Ego and the Id

In Freud's book *The Ego and the Id* he thoroughly explains his theory about how human beings have an Id, an Ego and a Super-Ego. The id is the part of us reacting to reflexes such

¹⁸ Robert M. Young, *Ideas in Psycho Analysis – Oedipus Complex* (Cox & Wyman Ltd., Reading, 2001) 3

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1999) 225

²¹ Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, 28

²² Robert M. Young, , *Ideas in Psycho Analysis – Oedipus Complex*, 12

as hunger. The super-ego is “an internalization of the father figure and cultural regulations.”²³ The super-ego often gets into conflicts with the id since the two sides often have a conflict of interest. The super-ego is also aggressive towards the ego. “The super-ego acts as the conscience, maintaining our sense of morality and the prohibitions of taboos.”²⁴ If the Oedipus complex is strong within a person the super-ego is stronger than the ego, resulting in a feeling of guilt.²⁵ The *Wikipedia encyclopedia* presents an explanation of how the three parts work together:

The ego, super-ego, and id work together to control the body. For example a newborn baby, when he is hungry, will cry for his mother. This is because his id is hungry and the ego worked out that a mother will feed her crying baby. However, when an adult is hungry, she will not cry. This is, in part, because the ego knows that her mother will no longer come to feed her, but also in part, due to the super-ego which knows that crying is not a socially acceptable reaction to being hungry.²⁶

In this theory about the three parts controlling the body, Freud also discusses the Oedipus complex saying:

The broad general outcome of the sexual phase dominated by the Oedipus complex may, therefore, be taken to be the forming of a precipitate in the ego, consisting of these two identifications in some way united with each other. This modification of the ego retains its special position; it confronts the other contents of the ego as an ego ideal or a super-ego. [...] The child's parents, and especially his father, were perceived as the obstacle to a realization of his Oedipus wishes; so his infantile ego fortified itself for the carrying of the repression by erecting this same obstacle within itself. [...] The super-ego retains the character of the father, while the more powerful the Oedipus complex was and the more rapidly it succumbed to repression, [...] the stricter will be the domination of the super-ego

²³ *Ego, super-ego, and id – Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Superego>, April 24, 2006.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ *Ego, super-ego, and id – Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*, op. cit.

over the ego later on – in the form of conscience or perhaps of an unconscious sense of guilt.²⁷

Freud means that a person suffering from the Oedipus complex will have difficulties accepting it, and will always have a feeling of guilt when the super-ego dominates the ego by saying what is right and wrong. “The tension between the demands of conscience and the actual performances of the ego is experienced as a sense of guilt. Social feelings rest on identifications with other people, on the basis of having the same ego ideal.”²⁸

Freud’s own childhood was a most unusual one:

Freud’s own family constellation was multi-generationally confused. His father was twenty years older than his mother and already a grandfather via a grown son from his first marriage when Freud was born. That son and another were at least as old as the new bride. Freud was the eldest son of his family but the youngest child in the broader family group. The other two young children were, respectively, a year older and the same age.²⁹

Rudnytsky says that it is not strange that Freud coined the expression ‘Oedipus complex’. He had strange family relationships. His father was forty years old when he married his mother who was twenty years old. From an earlier marriage the father had two grown sons making him both a grandfather and a father about the same time. “Because of the blurring of generational lines in his family constellation, furthermore, the distinction between fraternal and paternal relationships was unclear in Freud’s mind from the beginning.”³⁰ Freud himself said that he had found love of the mother and jealousy of the father and he thought that it was a general phenomenon of early childhood.³¹ When Freud had a younger brother, who was born one year after Freud, he was really jealous. The brother died within a couple of months and left Freud with subsequent feelings of guilt.³²

²⁷ Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, 30

²⁸ Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, 33

²⁹ Robert M. Young, *Ideas in Psycho Analysis – Oedipus Complex*, 30-31.

³⁰ Peter L. Rudnytsky, *Freud and Oedipus*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987) 25

³¹ *Ibid.*, 7

³² *Ibid.*, 19

This jealousy towards his father for taking the mother's attention followed Freud throughout his life. When the father died Freud talked about a dream in which he was asked to close his eyes. Rudnytsky says: "Freud metaphorically closes his own eyes at the same time that he closes those of his father. Thus, in addition to the pivotal psychoanalytical concepts of *repression* and *ambivalence*, the dream also displays the working of *identification*. Son and father become one through the gesture that expresses both love and hatred."³³

1.3 Klein's definition of the Oedipus complex

After Freud's death, another researcher, Melanie Klein, looked at the Oedipus complex, although from a different point of view. She states:

If the link between the parents perceived in love and hate can be tolerated in the child's mind, it provides him with a prototype for an object relationship of a third kind in which he is a witness and not a participant. A third position then comes into existence from which object relationships can be observed. Given this, we can also envisage being observed. This provides us with a capacity for seeing ourselves in interaction with others and for entertaining another point of view whilst retaining our own, for reflecting on ourselves whilst being ourselves.³⁴

This appears to be a more complex way of looking at the Oedipus complex in that it does not presuppose that the child cannot look at his or her situation from another perspective.

³³ *Ibid.*, 22

³⁴ Robert M. Young, *Ideas in Psycho Analysis – Oedipus Complex*, 40

Chapter II – Malcolm and his relationship to women

Malcolm has a very disturbed image of how a family should be built up and how it should function. Up until the age of five his mother Corinne was the world to him and according to Malcolm everything the father did was to make her sad but at the same time he did everything for her and spoiled her too much. Malcolm is split regarding the question of the father and of the mother. Since Corinne left him and his father when Malcolm was five years old he has a kind of a love-hate relation to her, but for the father he only feels hatred and he does think himself superior. He is convinced that it was his father that made his mother leave. Garland did not care enough about her and he thinks that even though Corinne loved her son very much, it was because of the father that she left. This leads to a twisted way of looking at women which will be studied closer in the next chapter. The love for the mother and the hatred towards the father are typical elements in the Oedipus Complex and it also affects Malcolm's way of parenting. He is not able to have a normal relationship to his children and he has such high demands that the children can never be good enough for him.

2.1 Malcolm and his mother

The reader first gets to know something about Malcolm's mother Corinne when Olivia first arrives at Foxworth Hall. She and Malcolm are walking around and when passing a door which, unlike the others is painted white, Olivia stops:

“No one goes into this room,” Malcolm declared. “It was my mother's room.” His voice was so cold and hard when he said that, and his eyes so far away, that I wondered what it was about his mother that bothered him so. He spat the word “mother” almost as if it were poison. What kind of man could hate his mother so? ³⁵

Already at the very first words about Corinne, Olivia, and also the reader, understand that something has happened in the relationship between Malcolm and his mother. When continuing to read the reader gets more and more perplexed about Malcolm's different

³⁵ V.C. Andrews, *Garden of Shadows* (New York: Pocket books fiction, 1989) 45

emotions towards his mother. They shift from love to hate in an instant and then change back the moment after:

“My mother? If you think knowing my mother has anything to do with me, you are sadly deluded Olivia. You want me to tell you about my mother. I’ll tell you about my mother!” [...]

“My mother,” he said bitterly, “she was so beautiful. So pretty and lively and loving. She was the world to me. I was so innocent then, so trusting, so unknowing. For then I did not know that ever since Eve, women have betrayed men. Especially women with beautiful faces and seductive bodies. Oh, she was deceptive, Olivia. For beneath her charming smiles and her cheerful love beat the heart of a harlot.”³⁶

At first Malcolm talks about Corinne as if she was his highly beloved mother, or even worse, a woman he loved with the love of a man towards a woman, not the love of a son towards his mother. Then he remembers how she let him down and he changes his opinion about her, saying that she was only like other women, manipulative and demanding.

Malcolm seems to think that his mother loved him very much and at some moments he talks about her only with love in his voice, making the reader understand that she considered him intelligent and very mature: “I would sit with her and she would complain to me. She respected my intelligence, you see. She never spoke down to me the way mothers often speak down to their children.”³⁷ Malcolm points out that his mother thought him mature which could be interpreted as his wish to be his mother’s lover, mature enough to get the love of a woman and not just the love of a mother.

In judging his mother very harshly at times, Malcolm is also judging the half of Man kind, the woman. When talking about how his parents met, he says that his mother was just passing by his father in a wagon on the street, smiling at him without knowing who he was at all. “She invited him to her home that night. Wouldn’t that tell you something? How impulsive a

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 60

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 102

person she was?”³⁸ He means that his father should have been more attentive. “See what I am saying? He should have been able to perceive the kind of woman she was immediately.”³⁹ In loving his mother so much, betrayal leaves him with feelings of hatred and Malcolm judges all women to be of this sort. He thinks of women, and his mother, like this: “Women like that are always conniving. They look so simple, so unassuming, so sweet, but they’re plotting, believe me. And some men, men like my father, fall for that type.”⁴⁰

Malcolm is also very disturbed when it comes to sexual relations, something which will be seen in the following chapters dealing with Olivia and Alicia. The feelings of a child towards his mother are normally not of a sexual nature but for Malcolm they are: “Yes, she left me”, he whispered. Left me only with the memory of her touch, of her kiss, of the sweet scent of her body.”⁴¹ He is always torn between the love he felt for his mother and the hatred towards her for leaving him: “Corinne”, he said. “I hated her; I loved her.”⁴² In his feelings, Malcolm appears very disturbed. At one point Olivia tries to talk to him about it:

“Malcolm, when you first looked at me, when you courted me, there must have been stronger feelings, feelings that – “

“Please,” he said, “don’t talk to me about feelings. I don’t want to hear about bells ringing and the world turning rose-colored. My mother’s letters are filled with such silly references.”

“Letters?”

“She wrote to my father when they were courting.”

“Where are her letters?”

“I burned them, turned them back to the smoke they were.”⁴³

He is incapable of showing Olivia any kind of amorous feelings and he has not chosen her out of love.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 103

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 104

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 62

⁴² *Ibid.*, 63

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 86

2.2 Malcolm and Olivia

Malcolm was not searching for the sensation of love in proposing to Olivia. He wanted a wife who would be loyal to him and who would not care about looks and fashion. He did not want the kind of woman that his mother was. He wanted a woman he could trust and who would never leave him. In the beginning of the story Malcolm says to Olivia: “My mother. You’re not like my mother. You would never be like my mother. You would never leave the children we will make together, will you, Olivia? Will you?”⁴⁴ Olivia, who is tall and not beautiful at all, is at first delighted that such a handsome a man would propose to her, as she did not have the looks and the right manner at all. Olivia is the daughter of a business man and she was raised to help her father in his work and that pleases Malcolm’s wishes of a wife.

After the wedding, Olivia waits for Malcolm to come to her for their wedding night. It does not happen and he does not show her any affection at all. On the second day at Foxworth Hall Olivia enters the swan room – the room of Malcolm’s mother. Nobody is allowed to enter the room, but Olivia is not aware that it concerns her as well. The room is decorated in red, rose and pink and in the middle of the room there is a bed shaped as a swan. Olivia explores the room and suddenly Malcolm gets in. He is furious at her having entered the room. It ends up with him forcing himself upon her.

I shook my head and then I felt him press himself in between my legs, seizing me roughly. I wanted to love him to make him happy, to caress him softly, but in this state, his face twisted, his eyes burning with rage, I could only close my own and fall back.

“Please, Malcolm”, I whispered, “not like this. Please, O won’t be like her; I’m not like her. I’ll love you and I’ll love our children.”

He didn’t hear me. When I opened my eyes, I saw he was lost in his anger and his lust. He came at me over and over again, thrusting into me viciously. I wanted to scream, but I was afraid of what it would do to him and I was embarrassed that my scream might be heard by one of the servants. I stifled my cries, biting down on my lip.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 63

Finally his anger poured into me. It felt so hot I thought it would scald me. He stopped his thrusts; he was satiated. He groaned and then buried his face in my bosom. I felt his body shudder and go limp. There was one final “Corinne,” and then he lifted himself from me, dressed quickly, and left the room.

So now I knew what lived in the shadows of Malcolm Neal Foxworth, haunting him. Now I know why he had chosen a woman like me. I was the opposite of his mother. She was the swan; I was the ugly duckling and he wanted it that way. The love I had longed for would never be mine.

Malcolm’s love had already been taken and destroyed by the woman who haunted this room.⁴⁵

As seen here Malcolm twists his mind into thinking of his mother when having sexual intercourse with Olivia. On another occasion Malcolm forces himself upon Olivia again. Afterwards he says: “Good.” [...] “I hope, Olivia,” he said, “that you are as fertile as I expected.” [...] “I want a son,” he repeated. “I married you because you are a serious type of woman who can be the mistress of a great house, but also because you have a full body that can provide me with the children I require.”⁴⁶ Olivia gives him a son after this meeting, whose name is Mal. Later on Joel is also born.

Even though Malcolm points out that he hates the kind of woman that his mother was, he cannot help being charmed and absolutely carried away by them, to Olivia’s unhappiness of course. At their wedding party Malcolm circulates among the women:

I expected Malcolm would become outraged at the loss of decorum as time passed, but whenever I looked for him, he was standing among a group of these women, laughing, permitting them to put their hand on him, letting them rub up against him, petting him rather suggestively.

I was shocked. These were the kind of women he despised – vapid, frilly types without an ounce of self-respect. But there he was, rushing to bring a glass of punch to

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 63-64

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 85

this one or that one or feeding a petit four to a woman who let him press the small cake through her lips. One even licked the crumbs off the tips of his fingers.⁴⁷

Olivia is devastated when she realises that she will never be anything else to Malcolm than his loyal wife working to keep his house in order and giving him children. After the birth of Joel, Malcolm is disappointed. “Malcolm was upset that I hadn’t given him a daughter, and angry that Joel was not a healthy child.”⁴⁸ When the doctor declared that Olivia cannot have any more children after the difficult pregnancy with Joel, Malcolm becomes furious:

“Are you standing there and telling me I will never have another child? Never have a daughter?”

“Why, yes... I...”

“How dare you, sir? How dare you presume?”

“It’s not a matter of presuming, Malcolm. This last pregnancy was quite difficult and -”

“I’ll hear no more of this”, he said, and turned to me with as hateful a face I have ever seen him wear.

He continues telling Olivia that she has not kept her promises since she cannot give him any more children, and especially the daughter that he wanted so badly. He blames her for this a great deal:

“Remember, Olivia, when we first contracted to be married, it was assumed that you would provide me with a large family, something I made clear that I required. I had and have definite ideas about what a Foxworth woman should be. You knew what I wanted, yet you failed me in this regard.”

“That is an unfair statement. It hasn’t been that I didn’t want to have any more children,”

I said, moving forward, my hands on my hips.

“Nevertheless, my dear Olivia, the fact is that you didn’t have any more children.

Couldn’t or wouldn’t is not important,” he said.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 81

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 89

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 194

Malcolm's perception of the world is very twisted and he has such high demands that are not possible to meet. It seems as though after the betrayal of his mother he makes such high demands so that no one can ever fulfil them. In that way he does not have to hope for anything because it is not possible to do what he asks for. The Oedipus Complex affects his whole life and all of his thoughts circulate around the mother and how she left him. In Olivia, he found the absolute opposite of his mother, a woman he could trust, but then he built up excessively high expectations towards her as well, resulting in her letting him down even though what he demands is nothing Olivia can affect.

2.3 Malcolm and Alicia

When Malcolm's father returns home to Foxworth Hall he brings his new bride, Alicia, who is pregnant with their child. She is nineteen years old and Malcolm's father Garland is fifty-eight. Alicia is very beautiful and Malcolm reacts very strongly. He does not like the fact that she is pregnant since there will now be another heir for the inheritance, but mostly because she looks like his mother and also acts like her. When they dine together for the first time, Alicia is telling Malcolm and Olivia about the journey that Garland and she have been making. "Malcolm seemed to move from moments of annoyance to moments of genuine pleasure. When Alicia turned her full attention to him, he was entranced. Once, she reached across the table and touched his wrist. I saw him blush, but he didn't move his hand away."⁵⁰ This amazement for Alicia increases all the time and then one day Alicia asks Olivia to come and swim naked in the lake. Olivia refuses and Alicia goes off alone. When Olivia looks out the window she can see Malcolm coming home but instead of coming into the house he follows Alicia. Olivia gets curious and goes out to watch them:

Alicia was already undressed and in the water. Malcolm stood on the bank, his jacket and shirt off.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 113

“Don’t come any closer,” she warned, crossing her arms over her breasts and keeping herself down in the water. “Just go back to the house, Malcolm.”

He laughed.

“Perhaps I should take your clothes back with me,” he said, teasing her with a movement toward her garments.

“Don’t you dare touch anything! Go away!”

“Come now, Alicia, surely you don’t enjoy being alone here.”

“I’m only here for a short dip to cool off. Garland will be home any moment.”

“No, he’s doing business in Charlottesville. Actually, he won’t be home for quite a while.”

“Get away,” she repeated, but he didn’t move.⁵¹

Malcolm continues undressing and follows Alicia in the water, naked. “You are so beautiful, Alicia,” he said. “So very beautiful. You should have been my wife, not his.”⁵² Alicia tells him how much she hates him and runs off. From this day Malcolm treats Alicia very badly as soon as the father is not around. Even though Alicia is beautiful and the type of woman Malcolm claims to hate he makes a picture of her being his wife. Again, the image of his mother is lurking in the back of his head; in wanting to have a wife like her he is thinking of his mother whom he loves dearly.

Later on, after having celebrated the third birthday of Christopher, Garland and Alicia’s son, Olivia hears Alicia screaming. She rushes over to find Alicia with her night-gown torn up and Garland lying on the floor with Malcolm over him. When Malcolm has taken Garland to his own bedroom to lie down on the bed Olivia asks Alicia what happened:

“I didn’t lock my door. Sometimes... sometimes Garland comes to me in the middle of the night,” she said. “When I heard it open, I assumed it was Garland, but it was Malcolm,” she said, looking at the door quickly, her face twisting as though the entire scene were being re-enacted before her very eyes.

“What did he want?”

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 145-146

⁵² *Ibid.*, 146

“He wanted – ” She stopped as if telling me were the most indecent thing she could do.

“He wanted me,” she said, her anger growing. “He came to my bed. I told him he shouldn’t be in here. He laughed and said not to worry. Garland was asleep. He said terrible things to me. He told me Garland was too old to satisfy me now, that now I would need him more than ever and it was all right since he was Garland’s son.”

“What did you do?”

“I told him to get out or I would call Garland, but he wouldn’t leave the room. I sat up, prepared to scream if he came any closer. He must have realized that, because he rushed onto the bed and put his hand over my mouth, pressing me back to the pillow and... fondling me roughly. I tried to fight him off and he ripped my nightgown.”⁵³

Alicia manages to make a lamp fall down and Garland comes in and interrupts Malcolm’s harassment. When the doctor arrives it is too late and Garland is dead. Alicia and Christopher stay at Foxworth Hall, and Alicia is devastated. After some time Olivia finds out how Malcolm has been coming into Alicia’s room and raping her several times. Alicia tells Olivia that she was very afraid of Malcolm during the rapes not because he hurt her but because of the way he acted. “He didn’t call me Alicia when he stroked my body and kissed my breasts”⁵⁴ Olivia understood immediately. He had been calling Alicia ‘Corinne’, the name of his mother. Also, when having sexual intercourse with Alicia he had the image of his mother in his mind, visualizing making love to her. These rapes resulted in Alicia being pregnant with Malcolm’s child and when Olivia blames him for having made his father’s wife, and then also his stepmother, pregnant he reasons as follows: “... he would tell me that Alicia tempted him, tormented him. That was why she got what she deserved. He would blame it on the type of woman she was. He hated her and he loved her the way he hated and loved his mother.”⁵⁵

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 160

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 178

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 162

2.4 Malcolm and Corinne, the daughter

After the rape Alicia becomes pregnant and has to be hidden during her pregnancy. Olivia pretends to be pregnant and they make everyone believe that she is the mother of Alicia's baby. When the baby is born Malcolm decides that her name will be Corinne:

“It's the most beautiful baby in the world, isn't it? Dimpled hands and feet, golden wavy hair, the bluest of blue eyes... why, my mother must have looked like this when she was a baby,” he cooed with a gentleness I had never before heard in his voice. “Corinne, my sweet beautiful daughter, Corinne!”

“Corinne!” I was shocked. “Surely, you wouldn't... how can you name that innocent baby after the mother whom you claim to hate?”

“You don't understand.” He shook his head and waved his hand in front of his face as though he were clearing away cobwebs. “It will be my way to keep constantly aware of the deceitful, beguiling ways of beautiful women, or I may allow myself to believe and trust her too much. As much as I love her already, every time my lips say ‘Corinne’, I will be reminded of my betraying mother who promised to stay and love me until I was a man. I will never be so hurt again.”⁵⁶

Malcolm here shows how hurt he has been by his mother, and it appears that he thinks that she betrayed him, not “just” left him. Even in talking about his own daughter, whom he claims to love already even though she will be the kind of woman his mother was, he wants to be reminded of his mother's betrayal. It seems absurd to name your own daughter after the mother whom you hate, but he does do it.

There is no end to Malcolm's declarations of love for his daughter and Olivia watches them, concerned:

I was amused by the way he spoke to her whenever he did go to her. It was as if he expected her to understand his words, his promises, his plans for her education and training. Sometimes, when I overheard him speaking to Corinne, I got a chilling feeling. It was as if he thought she was his mother who had been fed goblets of liquid from the mythical fountain of youth until she had returned to this infant state. In his mind she was

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 243

a baby, but she had a grown woman's comprehension of things said to her, especially things said to her by him.⁵⁷

In this absurd, deranged way of looking at his daughter, Malcolm seems to direct his love towards the new Corinne. He continues to treat her as a princess and she is somewhat like a trophy to him, a Corinne he wants and thinks he can keep at Foxworth Hall for life.

“Malcolm's adoration of his beautiful daughter increased daily. He not only had photographs taken of her continually, he had her portrait painted, something he still hadn't done for me.

The picture was placed in his trophy room for his private viewing. In his eyes she was perfect.”⁵⁸ The story continues with Malcolm showing his affection to Corinne very day and when she does something that could mean that she, too is independent, Malcolm reacts and point out that she has promised that she will stay with him forever. It is unrealistic of Malcolm to believe that a promise Corinne made when she was a child and who did not know anything but the love for her parents, would last. Still he does, and it is very clearly shown that his high expectations once again are far too high. He cannot function socially and is very egoistical. He does not think of Corinne's happiness at all.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 256

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 271

Chapter III – Malcolm and his relationship to men and the connection to Sophocles’ Oedipus

Malcolm also has a very deranged image of parenting and fatherhood. Since he believes that it was his father who made his mother abandon him, her precious son, he hates him very much and he is, like Oedipus, the reason for his father’s death. This chapter will clarify how Malcolm’s hatred towards his father and his Oedipus complex also affects his relationships to other men – his sons and his parenting. Finally the similarities that exist between Malcolm and Oedipus will be discussed.

3.1. Malcolm and his father

In the beginning of the book Malcolm and Olivia live alone at Foxworth Hall but after a while it is announced that Malcolm’s father Garland is returning home with his new wife. On the morning of their arrival Malcolm says: “Knowing my father [...] he might very well be arriving at four in the morning rather than four in the afternoon. Important details like that always escape him.”⁵⁹ Already in this instance, Malcolm shows his discontent towards his father and with the punctuality of Malcolm he tries to be the opposite of his father. When Garland does not come at the time he has announced it annoys Malcolm very much. In telling Olivia about Garland meeting his mother, he is very negative towards the father and claims that he is very weak for the kind of women Malcolm despises. “He saw her crossing a street in Charlottesville, stopped his carriage, and began a conversation with her. Without even knowing her family background!”⁶⁰ He goes on talking about how his parents had been in a rush to get married. Olivia interrupts him and argues that Malcolm and she have had an ever shorter courting period. He responds: “It wasn’t the same thing. I knew what kind of woman you were; I didn’t need endless examples to demonstrate and support my view. He was

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 101

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 102

blinded from the beginning and rushed into a proposal.”⁶¹ Here Malcolm shows that he cannot understand other people. He acted exactly like his father in asking Olivia to marry him very quickly after they met, but he is unable to see that his own actions actually could be similar to his fathers. His hatred towards both the parents makes him blind and he does not see anything but the foolishness of his parents’ actions.

When Garland and Alicia tell Malcolm and Olivia about their journeys Garland is very affectionate and kisses Alicia all the time, as well as cuddling her. Malcolm mutters: “Now you can see how ridiculous he is. [...] Can you understand why I feel the way I do about him?”⁶² After the birth of Alicia’s and Garland’s baby Christopher, Garland spends most of his time at home, much to Malcolm’s delight:

After the birth of Christopher, Garland began to spend a great deal more time at home.

Malcolm claimed he was happy to have his father out of his hair at the office.

“He doesn’t understand the intricacies of high finance and I have to spend too much time explaining things to him. He annoys everyone with his questions,” he said. “It’s better that he behaves like a retired man. I wish he would officially retire,” he added.⁶³

Here the reader can see that Malcolm is trying to make his father look like a person who does not understand much and it is as if he tries to make his father look like a child. He means that his father is very naïve and the best thing would be if he retired, and did not deal with business anymore since he is not capable. Malcolm does not have any empathy at all for other human beings and sees himself as the most intelligent, the most correct and the best person in the world. He does not ever see his own imperfections.

Alicia later wants to move into the swan room and Garlands agrees to the suggestion. This makes Malcolm furious: “Afterwards, Malcolm ranted and raved about the disgusting way his

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 103

⁶² *Ibid.*, 109

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 130

father gave in to every whim and wish of Alicia's. 'He's spoiling her just the way he spoiled my mother,' he told me."⁶⁴

As regards Christopher, Malcolm starts going on to Olivia about how his father spoils him as well:

"You would think that it was his first child."

"Perhaps he is proud of not only having been able to have a child, but having one so handsome and bright," I said. Malcolm's eyes narrowed, and for the first time I understood that he was jealous of Garland's attention to Christopher. "Didn't your father give you the same kind of attention?"

"Hardly. It was the other way around. I had to practically beg him to take me along on his business trips. After my mother left, he was so weak, he even tried to blame me for driving her away. I'll never forgive him for that. My mother loved me more than anything, and it was his own inadequacies that forced her to abandon me. Don't you understand, every time he looks into my blue eyes, he sees Corinne. He knows he could never make her love him the way she loved me. Oh, she must have hated him... otherwise she never would have left me. I'll never forgive him for losing her."⁶⁵

Once again, he blames Garland for having drifted away from his beloved mother and that he himself had no part of it. Malcolm cannot admit to himself that there is perhaps a small chance of him being the reason for his mother leaving. Everything bad that happens is someone else's fault. It seems as if Malcolm thinks that when something good happens it is because of him and when something bad happens it is due to somebody else.

At one point Malcolm tries to rape Alicia and Garland enters the room to save her:

Garland rushed to the bed and pulled Malcolm off. They began to wrestle, Garland cursed him, and Malcolm said all sorts of terrible things about Garland's first wife, this room, his manhood. They fell to the floor and continued struggling, but neither struck the other with his fist.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 139

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 154

“Finally, Malcolm broke free of Garland’s hold and crawled toward the doorway, but Garland was in such a rage, he wouldn’t permit him to escape. He took hold of him again and they threw each other about until Garland screamed. He slipped out of Malcolm’s arms and fell to the floor.”⁶⁶

Garland dies and Malcolm shows no remorse even though he is the reason for his father’s death. He says: “It wasn’t my fault. He was a sick man anyway.”⁶⁷ Like Oedipus, Garland kills his father and it confirms to us once again the resemblances between Malcolm and Oedipus.

3.2 Malcolm and his sons

As noted in chapter one, the Oedipus complex affects the ability to be a parent if one has not resolved it. As for Malcolm, this is shown very clearly in his way of treating his sons. Mal is the firstborn son and Olivia is delighted but very disappointed in Malcolm: “Each announcement should have had us hugging and kissing, grateful that we had a healthy child. But Malcolm reacted to everything the baby did with a surprising indifference, as though he had expected no less. He took it all for granted and never showed a father’s delight and happiness.”⁶⁸ It is as though Malcolm is not able to feel anything but rage and anger and even now, when he has got a son, he cannot love him. He sees him as a product, that has to follow the rules and instructions of how to function. “If anything, he was impatient with the baby’s progress. He was intolerant of the growing process and didn’t want to be around to watch the baby make his small but continuous movements forward. He hated it when I brought the baby to the dinner table and ordered me to feed Mal before our own meals.”⁶⁹ The reader could believe that when Malcolm sees Olivia’s maternal love towards the baby, Malcolm thinks of himself being a baby and his mother’s love towards him. His Oedipus complex makes him not want to be reminded of how it was.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 161

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 88

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

When the second child Joel is born he is sickly, something that Malcolm cannot accept and he says to Olivia: “The Foxworths are noted for being healthy and strong. Let it be your goal and responsibility to see that this baby of yours changes and becomes what I would expect my sons to be – strong, aggressive, assertive, manly in all ways.”⁷⁰ When the child is not what he expects him to be Malcolm says “this baby of yours” to Olivia. It is as if he does not consider himself to be responsible for the child when it is not doing well, and during Joel’s childhood he is constantly ignored by Malcolm.

One time when the children have grown up a little, Malcolm enters the nursery for once and starts raising his voice. “Joel started to cry. By now both of our sons were sensitive to Malcolm’s outbursts, and Joel, especially, had an inordinate fear of his own father. Mal was getting to be the same way. ‘You’re scaring the children’, I said. ‘I’ll do worse if he isn’t quiet when I speak.’ ”⁷¹ Malcolm continues to scare his own children and he seems perfectly satisfied to have it that way.

When Mal turns five years old Malcolm decides that it is time to hire a tutor. “Mal hated him and I found him quite cold and much too firm in his manner with a five-year-old, but Malcolm thought he was perfect. ‘Discipline is what they will need during these early years. It’s when they form their study habits for the rest of their lives.’ ”⁷² Malcolm does not care at all that his son does not like the teacher and that even his own wife thinks the tutor too firm. Not even in the case of his own son, is Malcolm able to feel any sort of empathy.

Music comes into Mal and Joel’s life and they play the piano. Malcolm hates it and thinks that it makes them less manly and that they will become sissy and not care about business and acting like the men they were supposed to grow up to be. “Malcolm heard the piano and came to the salon, the rage already burning in his eyes. I looked up from my needlework just as he came charging through the doorway. He slammed the piano shut with such violence, he

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 89

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 95

⁷² *Ibid.*, 142-143

almost caught poor Mal's hands beneath the lid. I think he wanted to do that to end Mal's piano playing forever."⁷³ He goes to Mal: 'He's disobeying me! [...] He knows what I said about it.' He reached forward and took Mal by the back of his neck, nearly lifting the terrified child off the ground, and dragged him out of the salon to the library for a whipping."⁷⁴ The only time the boys ever get any physical contact with their father is when he beats them up.

Joel grows up to be a very talented musician, defying his father's plans for him and Malcolm resents this. When Corinne is born he spoils her, while considering the boys solely as being the sons of Olivia. He says to her: "I don't care anymore how you raise your sons. They've already been sissied and ruined."⁷⁵

To Olivia's great misfortune both of the boys die. Malcolm when driving a motorbike, Joel in an avalanche in Austria while travelling with an orchestra. As expected Malcolm blames Olivia for both of the deaths.

3.3 Malcolm compared to Sophocles' Oedipus

Just like Sophocles' Oedipus, Malcolm loves his mother, and when having sex with other women he has the image of his mother in front of him and believes that it is to her he is making love. In the original Greek play Oedipus at least shows regret since he does not know that he has been married to his mother. When he was born it was predicted that he would marry his mother and kill his father so his parents left him and another couple found him and raised him. It results in Oedipus marrying his mother and them having children together:

OEDIPUS.	Oh moee. Death to my ears. These children –
CHORUS.	Don't say it.
OEDIPUS.	My daughters –

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 150

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 151

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 260

CHORUS. Zeus, no!

OEDIPUS. Born of her pain,
 My mother's pain.

CHORUS. Your children.

OEDIPUS. Their father's sisters.⁷⁶

Exactly like Oedipus, Malcolm has made his father's wife pregnant. Even though it is not his biological mother it is his stepmother and when having sexual intercourse with her he sees his mother. The difference between Oedipus and Malcolm is that Malcolm knows who the other woman is, that she legally belongs to his father as she is his stepmother.

Oedipus also kills his father, but here as well, he did not know that it was his father until afterwards. When Garland dies Malcolm shows no remorse. As we can see there are strong resemblances between Oedipus and Malcolm, but the difference between them is that Oedipus did these things to his parents not knowing that they actually were his parents. Malcolm knew all along.

When Oedipus finds out what he has done he pierces his eyes so that he will not be able to see. That is his punishment, and Malcolm also gets punished even though it is not himself pursuing the act. He has a stroke which makes him bound to a wheel chair for the rest of his life. It is a sort of a punishment and the reader can understand that Andrews wants to show how a person who does not feel empathy for others can be punished afterwards. His Oedipus complex has destroyed the life of a large number of persons due to his inability to normally function socially.

⁷⁶ Sophocles, *Oedipus*, (Nick Hern Books, London, (430 B.C.), 2001) 79

Conclusion

In V. C. Andrews' *Garden of Shadows* the reader gets to know Malcolm, who has not resolved his Oedipus complex. The Oedipus complex is a term in psychoanalysis discussed by Sigmund Freud, which argues that a boy child has an unnatural love to his mother with a sexual connection. It results in the boy wanting to get rid of the father. Normally this feeling dissolves when the child grows up but it does not for Malcolm and he cannot function normally in his social life. Malcolm's mother left him when he was five years old leaving him with a kind of a love-hate relation to her and he is convinced that it is his father that drove her away. His mother was the kind of woman he now despises; sweet, simple and unassuming. He cannot understand how his father could have been so stupid to fall for her but at the same time he sees her as the woman of his dreams and when making love, or more correctly, raping women, Malcolm sees his mother.

In Olivia he finds a woman whom he considers loyal and he thinks that she will never leave him. Since she is not beautiful he is not affected by her in the way he is affected by other women who charm him. When being charmed he cannot keep his cold façade. Their marriage is cold and without love. He treats Olivia as one of his servants, someone who is not more important than any one else in the house. His Oedipus complex has made him choose a trustable woman who is not at all like his mother. Then he will not have to be reminded of her.

In parenting his children he cannot accept Joel and when the boys start to learn how to play the piano he becomes furious. With Corinne, the daughter, he is delighted and can never give her enough. Even though he has named her after his mother because he never wants to forget the betrayal of beautiful women, he is caught by Corinne's charm. Malcolm's Oedipus complex does not affect only him but everybody around him as well.

Unlike the original Oedipus, Malcolm is aware of the fact that it is his father that he kills and that it is with his stepmother he is having sexual intercourse. Oedipus punished himself by piercing his eyes out when finding out the truth, and Malcolm gets punished by a stroke. This essay has argued that Malcolm is the modern Oedipus.

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