



Men and Mothers: The Lifelong Struggle of Sons and Their Mothers

Hendrika C. Freud

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Not all men vie with their fathers for the love of their mothers. In some families the mother becomes the central figure for her son - the father is excluded (or excludes himself) and does not come between mother and son. The main thesis of this book - using clinical vignettes and quotes from the work of Marcel Proust to illustrate the author's points - is that in these cases fantasies of matricide replace patricide. Men develop their male gender identity by being permitted to separate from their mother early on, but when a man does not resolve his infantile tie to his mother he risks remaining in a passive and/or dependent position towards her. Over-identification with the mother might ensue, hampering masculine development. Mothers who seek emotional support by binding their sons too closely can become seductive towards them. The child is inclined to try to satisfy the emotional needs of his mother, and he fears rejection if he asserts his independence instead of complying. A silent pact between mother and son leads to denial of differences, specifically between gender and generation. The author calls this mother-son bond, from which aggression has been banned, "the symbiotic illusion". Suppressed hatred will seek alternative routes of expression: a son might avoid all intimacy with women, or he might develop a sexual perversion. Perverse sexual scenarios then become a prerequisite in order to save potency while functioning heterosexually.

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