
**PSYCHOANALYTICAL READING OF PAUL MOREL IN SONS AND
LOVERS**

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Sons and Lovers was not the first novel that Lawrence wrote rather *The White Peacock* and *The Trespasser* preceded it. It will be misleading to say that what Lawrence deals with in this novel is not a part of his real vision but almost the exact opposite is true.

It can be argued that there are ample evidences to believe that *Sons and Lovers* is an autobiographical work. Wayne Templeton aptly remarks, “*Sons and Lovers* is both autobiographical, in part, and psychological – not necessarily Oedipal but certainly an insightful analysis of relationships and the dependency of individual self-awareness upon social integration; that the author as a conscious writer is different from the man whose conscious and unconscious experiences give the novel its genesis; and that inherent in this novel, as novel of experience, is a process: the ‘development – which is slow like growth’ – of Paul Morel from alienation to awareness.”¹

The first draft of *Sons and Lovers* was called “Paul Morel” and the degree of the author’s involvement with the central character has led some critics to read the book as an apologia rather than a novel. But a deep reading of the novel conveys a contrary message. M. Spilka says, “Though it begins as a realistic novel in the documentary tradition, it everywhere shows the sign of becoming the kind of religious psychodrama that Lawrence would develop in his next major novels, *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* that he would adhere to in most of his later fictions.”² In writing his version of the pubescent, adolescent who struggles to become a sexually emancipated adult – that is, in deriving wounded but potent Paul Morel, Lawrence in effect, has derived himself as artist. He is then free to speak poetry and doctrine to the world, for he has made poetry in *Sons and Lovers* out of the tangled indoctrinations of relationships. Alfred Booth Kuttner defines the novel as, “*Sons and Lovers* has the great distinction of being very solidly based upon a very commonplace of our emotional life; it deals with a mother, who lavished all her affection upon her son.”³

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The early relations between Mrs. Morel and Paul are full of a delicate and poetic charm. Paul's admiration for his mother knows no bounds; her presence is always absorbing.

It does not take too long when their relationship develops oedipal affinities. After William's death, she starts depending more and more on him. A.B. Kuttner remarks: "By this time the interaction between mother and son is complete; she lives in him and he in her. In fact, his whole attitude towards her is but the answer which she gradually evokes from him as her whole life finds expression in her son". 20

The novel takes new turn when Paul attracts towards the first woman, Miriam Leivers, a shy exalted and romantic girl who leads a rather lonely life with her parents and brothers on a neighboring farm. In terms of man-woman Paul relationship with Miriam reflects Lawrence's own relationship with Jessie Chambers, who writes about Lawrence's tendency to "label" her: "He declared I was like Emily Bronte, which I resented, feeling it was a false short-cut to understanding me, like sticking a label on.....It made me feel that for him I was becoming less and less of a suffering, struggling human being, and more and more of a mental concept, a pure abstraction." 5

However, after this relationship with Miriam, his life becomes almost unbearably complicated because of his attachment to his mother. Wayne Templeton further urges: "While Mrs. Morel sleeps with her son and fondles' him, Mrs. Leivers teaches her daughter the love of Christ, with the same passion. For Miriam, as for Paul, the 'honest' sexuality of adolescence is repressed and a kind of surrogate love is allowed to surface in its place". 6

Templeton remarks again: In other words, "the relationship, on both sides, is confused by a search of identity, which denies any kind of reciprocity. The two lovers are actually looking for a partner who does not exist in the other person, whom they, then, try to mould into the idealized visions they seek." 7

Regarding this clash, John Middleton Murry points out that "it had been discovered that in *Sons and Lovers* Lawrence had independently arrival at the main conclusion of psychoanalysts and the English followers of Freud came to see him." 8

At one point in their relationship, Paul begins to turn to another woman, Clara Dawes, a friend of Miriam. Graham Hough defines her as: "Clara Dawes represents all that Miriam does not. She is an independent emancipated, experienced and physically inhibited... While Miriam trespasses on sanctities, there had been the mother's preserve, Clara Dawes stands firmly and freely on

unoccupied ground. Miriam wants a completely committed love-with all its concomitants of fidelity, tenderness and understanding.”⁹

Miriam knew how strong the attraction of Clara for him was; but still she was certain that the best in him would triumph. His feeling for Dawes- who, moreover, was a married woman- was shallow and temporal, compared with his love for herself. He would come back to her, she was sure. However, A.B. Kuttner comments that “his mother has not stood so much between them. But it is only temporarily. He cannot give himself to Clara any more than he could give himself to Miriam”¹⁰

Most of the critics of Lawrence agree to the view that all of Paul Morel’s relationships can best be explained in form of the Freudian perspective. Of course, Oedipus complex explains much of novel’s actions and Paul’s relationship with his mother, Miriam and Clara.

But Mark Spilka believes that the Freudian theme is more Freudian than Lawrentian: “it involves a kind of Freudian triangle-mother-son-sweetheart- while the conflict in all future novel is centres upon a single man and woman”¹¹

Therefore, it is right to say that Paul’s ultimate rejection of both Clara and Miriam shows that love in man-woman relationship for Lawrence is “the melting into pure communion”. He says: “All whole love between man and woman is thus, dual, a love which is the motion of melting, fusing together into oneness and then we are like a rose. We surpass even love, love is encompasses and surpassed. We are two who have a pure connexion. We are two, isolated like gems in our unthinkable otherness. But the rose contains and transcends us, we are one rose, beyond.”¹²

Paul doesn’t seem to understand until the final moments of the novel, however, that his mother’s love was something jealous and ultimately destructive. His release from her feels like a victory, he may now be able to love someone else. Flowers may reappear here, but now they symbolize Paul’s parting from Miriam, and not a bond. The other imagery that is important is the city’s “gold, phosphorescence” in the final paragraph. Frequently in the novel, Lawrence paints scenes of happiness and love with light colours of the sky, the return of light colours here signifies Paul’s choice of life over the “darkness” of death.

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