

## **D. H. Lawrence Casts Forces on Paul**

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**Abstract:** *Sons and Lovers*, a novel by D. H. Lawrence has long lent itself well to Freudian criticism. The well-known Freudian theory of Oedipus complex, with a reference to the play *Oedipus the King* explains how a son craves for his mother and how he wishes his father to be murdered. Here it is told how the concept of Oedipus Complex is reversed in the case of Paul. Naturalists believe that individuals' lives and behavior are influenced by their internal desires and external forces of society. In this paper the researcher tries to overview the novel from Freudian perspective and then put greater light on the cases where the novel disclaims this approach. In fact the study has inclined toward the naturalistic view on the whole novel with the focus on Paul's situation. The paper says of inability of characters to fight and resist against the natural elements such as heredity and environment in the way naturalist writers offer. It will reveal how tragically characters in the novel are the victim of the situation over which they don't have control.

**Keywords:** *Freudian analysis, destructive love, naturalism, internal and external drives*

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Born in Nottinghamshire, England, David Herbert Lawrence (1885) authored poems, short stories, plays, essays and novels. In his novel, *Sons and Lovers* (1913) which is considered his masterpiece by some including critics and which is his third novel after *The White Peacock* (1911) and *The Trespasser* (1912), David Herbert Lawrence tells the story of a woman, Gertrude who marries a man, Walter Morel, a collier, bad-tempered and lower in class. Being very different in attitude, behavior and chain of thought, the couple let their love vanish soon after marriage. The woman who gets disappointed with her husband pours all her love and hope on his sons, especially the middle one, Paul. Gertrude's emotion to her son casts shades so powerfully over Paul that he cannot lend, wholeheartedly, his love to any woman. Paul feels love and sympathy to his mother and is under her dominance till toward the end of the novel when, he and his sister overdose their mother to stop her long last illness. The act of overdosing was done for the sake of both Gertrude herself, who was in great pain, and the family members especially Annie, her daughter, and also for the sake of Paul, not able to bear the sick woman's suffering. The way Lawrence describes characters and depicts ordinary events and situations make the novel one of the worth-reading stories of the twentieth century of England. The images given directly through Lawrence's mouth about the people in the novel and the dialogues put in their daily life make a clear imagery of them, which are unique to the author.

### **2. NATURALISTIC CRITICISM**

The Bildungsroman novel, *Sons and Lovers*, has long tolerated Freudian criticism. In it, the main male character, Paul meets and make relationships with two women, Miriam, the spiritual, religious girl, and Clara whose physical beauty is absorbing to the young man but neither can he decide to take as a mate. This inability in making decision is related to an instability which has itself been related to Oedipus complex. Harrison in his article says, "Kuttner was the first critic to

see in the novel a psychological dynamic between son, mother and father akin to what Freud had described as the Oedipus complex”(2).David Trotter in the introduction to the novel emphasizes, “He must have known that the theme of sons and lovers as he himself enunciated it in a letter to Garnett- the ‘split’ between ‘soul’ and ‘passion’- was a favorite preoccupation of the sex novelists” (xxii)

Regarding Freudian theory, Paul cannot love neither Miriam nor Clara because he is involved in his Oedipal ties. But it seems the novel can also very well suit the naturalistic analysis. As Lawrence says in his article, *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious and Fantasia of the Unconscious*, the life story is not about the love- relation of a son to a mother in the way any man can love any woman, rather it is a tale of a woman’s dominance and its unhappy consequences. (2) This is quite different from what Freud claims in his well-known theory of Oedipus complex. Although no critical view on works of art can be dismissed, Lawrence’s point of view is no doubt the best evidence for arguing a work through a certain critical approach: “Yet when Lawrence read the longer article in September 1916 he expressed a strong dislike of Kuttner’s approach to Sons and Lovers for the way in which it reduced the complexity of fiction of the schematic simplicity of psychoanalytic theory.” (Harrison 4)

Concerning the critical points inserted on the novel, among those critics who dismiss the idea of Freudian analysis on Sons and Lovers can be mentioned another name, Stoll who finds “The superficially Freudian and almost deliberately over-simplified analysis” improper. (3)

To look at the story from another perspective rather than Oedipus complex, Paul and his personal features well suit the naturalistic approach.

Harrison’ explanation helps better support of this: “Lawrence compares the development of the novel to organic growth; like the naturalist writer.

Emile Zola, he wants to study Paul’s psychological situation as a result of biological traits inherited from his parents and shared with his siblings, as well as examining the results of his environment in the opinions he expresses and the choices he makes.” (4)

Naturalistic criticism tour the work of art to hunt the signs of heredity and environment being influencing or determining the characters’ behavior. It is true “The classical Oedipus approach to the novel,” Harrison says “tends to compare Paul’s situation to the description of male sexual life outlined in Freud’s almost contemporaneous 1912 paper.” (4) However the internal and external drives of characters’ lives ought as well, to be considered. The impact of a number of forces can be traced from the very beginning of Paul’s existence. Firstly, while Mrs. Morel does not love her husband, she gives birth to an unwanted child. Secondly, most people, including Paul, do not have the chance of choosing their own name. They are born with a name already chosen for them. The name given to a person may have a disturbing impact on his features. Meaning small and implying not being powerful enough to free himself from the dominance of his mother, “Paul” like a small child, cannot make his mind independently. Eventually he grows able to travel to stability in decision-making- by the end of the novel and after facing tragic circumstances of losing happy moments. And lastly, Paul's inherent facial similarity to his mother is another issue he does not have authority on. Looking a bit more pessimistically at the issue, we can claim that the acceptance of such a man's courtship by a woman with such characteristic as Gertrude possesses, is determined by the forces over which they do not have authority, and which shadow over the power of their will.

However, as readers go further through the novel, they encounter a great number of other factors which neither Paul nor other characters have the power to stop or diminish. In fact what people in the novel show is seemingly determined by their features related to social and psychological traits, as well as those which are genetically inherited. What follows is the explanation of some these elements. In fact naturalistic view shed light on three cases, of which sons and the father form one, another aspect is related to mother, and finally Miriam holds the last case. Some hints to Clara are also added.

### 3. FATHER, SONS

Paul, the second son of the family, clever, poorer in health than his siblings during his childhood, learning French and Germany from his godfather, sympathetic and looking very similar to his mother is the beloved son of Mrs. Morel. This son is the only hope for Mrs. Morel after the death of her first son, William who dies in his young age in London.

Telling about Paul from birth to growing to maturity, the novel puts him in the center of attention. In the novel he is pictured as a man who is not able to leave his mother for the sake of another woman. Some of his most considerable characteristics are foreshadowed from the very beginning of his life. When playing with his sister, Paul damages Annie's doll which then is burned by him. The doll symbolizes the feminine and the event can be defined as an evidence for his unusual behavior towards female gender when he grows up. When he gets old enough to choose a mate for himself, he does not perform stability in his relation to females. The boy is not able to reach a balance in his attention to women, so he finds treating the main female characters of his life all problematic: He loves his mother more than an ordinary love to a mother. His feeling to her prevents him from loving any other woman whole-heartedly. In fact this destructive hurting love lets him compare girls with his mother with her particular blocking emotion towards the son.

Paul feels a kind of "Inability to understand what he wants from women." (Harrison 6) He cannot lend himself to a woman whom he can love from both spiritual and physical aspects. In association with Miriam whose relationship he calls a simple friendship, he can see only spirituality. Another aspect of his love, physical love is bestowed to a married woman, Clara whose attention is somehow difficult for Paul to maintain permanently, though easy to draw. Paul can not continue his relationship with Clara because, she reminds that, she is thinking of living with her husband; she cannot leave him; she "belonged" to him. Perhaps this difficult- to- attain relationship is more powerfully absorbing than the easy- at- hand Miriam from whose love he is pretty informed. "With Miriam, his friendship and affection makes physical love unbearably awkward, whilst with Clara his easy physical intimacy barely masks the sense of emotional detachment. (ibid)He seems not to be able to weigh Clara's physical beauty against Miriam's spiritual features. In fact he is not entirely satisfied in relationship with any of the women because each relation lacked something; Miriam is purely spiritual and Clara's attractiveness is thoroughly physical.

Paul apparently possesses a non-stable, uncertain emotion towards all women. In fact he is in a dubious position even to his mother. He is unconsciously clinging to his mother's destructive love but toward the end of the novel, putting morphine in her milk to end her pain, he deliberately frees himself from her dominance. These two kinds of behavior are two ends of extremes which is not seen in balanced normal characters, rather it may be seen in disturbed character's like Paul's.

Normally there is a natural emotional relationship between a father and children; children from the very beginning of their life like and learn to like and respect their fathers. The relationship between mother and children may be, especially during the few years after their birth, more tied and stronger than children's relationship with their fathers. It is most probably because of children's needs which are fulfilled by mothers, and the other reason is that women are by nature more emotional and sensitive than men to children's need and pains. It is very usual for a man to be loved by his children. But when one of the parents has a cruel behavior, or like Morel is not so attentive to his family and spends much of his money on his drinking, he is normally less lovable. Father, Mr. Morel has shown a brute, non-loving figure for both mother and children, but mother, depriving father of his normal position and holding the top position, has enforced the animosity between father and the children. Acting powerfully as a woman who does her maternal duties and also replaces paternal love to the children, she has gathered children round the center of her existence and taken father's position. In such a family the natural reaction of children is leaving father for the sake of mother.

Mrs. Morel has no choice but unconsciously being forced to go astray from her husband: "At last Mrs. Morel despised her husband. She turned to the child; she turned from the father." (20) Telling lies about his income and also about the ownership of house where they live, added by his defiance, unkind behavior towards his wife and children, being drunk most of the time, Morel has

demonstrated a tyranny from whom Mrs. Morel breaks. Hopeless of improvement in their relationship, she tries to hold her son's love as a strong support.

Seeing such a misery as their mother suffers, sons try to release their mother from father's oppression: Before his engagement to Lily, William gives all his money to his mother. Once returned from London, where he is employed, he brings a lot of nice presents for all members of his family. Even in choosing his wife, the mother's opinion about the bride is important for him. Paul also gives his salary to Mrs. Morel when he is employed in Mr. Jordan's company. As compensate for the poverty which Mrs. Morel bears in her husband's house, Paul has the fancy of building a house for his mother, when he grows up, to live happily and comfortably.

Harrison in his article writes, "Paul's unrealistic dreams of affording a house for his mother (in which they would live together, untroubled by other people or even by the march of time) seem curiously conditioned by the working-class upbringing whose poverty he looks to negate." (4) True, it is not surprising that a boy hopes many good things and tries to fulfill wishes for his mother, but his exaggeration and the sick connection of Paul to his mother is great evidence for his imbalanced character.

Yasser KhameesRagabAman in his article states, "Lawrence's Sons and Lovers revolves around the chaotic life of Paul who, through bad circumstances and disturbance in family relations, becomes almost the lover of his mother. (4) In the unhealthy situation of Mr. Morel's house, Paul does not have the chance of up-bringing well and healthy. The family problems exceed, mother has difficulty in loving her husband, children cannot find affection from their father's part; the subsequence is instability of characters especially of Paul whose sick-like behavior is enforced by his mother and their ill situation, causing still more suffering for him.

In Freudian criticism it is the father whose murder the son is thinking of. But here, the issue reversed, it is the mother, not the father, who is overdosed by Lawrence's Paul with the cooperation of his sister, Annie. Mercy-killing of the mother is not only for her own sake to stop her suffering, but also for Paul's own sake as a struggle to remove her dominance over his life.

Unlike his imperfect desire towards women, Paul shows affection towards Baxter Dawes, Clara's husband. Visiting him, frequently, when hospitalized and leaving him money, Paul as a young man has a rather unusual behavior to a man considered a rival. This, in addition to overdosing his mother, has been interpreted as homo-sexual hints which the paper does not go further through, because it is not the matter of concentration of study.

In the case of this mother-son affiliation, blood plays a role stronger than any other kind of connection. In addition to his facial resemblance to the woman, it seems that in the filial relationship to Gertrude, Paul is the most blatant hire of his mother's behaviour. Her excessive love to Paul, as an illness has infected the poor son. This genetic inheritance contaminated all his life; he was ill mannered in loving people as his mother was in affection to her sons. Gertrude could not tolerate the connection to her husband, nor did Paul to any woman as a true mate. He mused over numerous issues and spent time over sophisticated matters including learning languages, as his mother was a woman of ideas and interested in social, political argument. And the way he earned his living was inherently the way his mother wished. Overall, his similarity in mood and personality to the woman who gave birth to him was something quite obvious for anyone with a little consideration.

#### **4. MOTHER IN NEED OF LOVE**

Naturalism views an individual as a "subject to the social and economic forces in the family, the class, and the milieu into which that person is born". (Abrams, 261) What makes the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Morel impossible, in addition to individual differences is the different social levels. The way members of each class behave is not appreciated, not even understood or tolerated by the members of other classes. In the novel we read the meticulous way Mrs. Morel does her housework and keeps her kitchen is always the matter of teasing among her husband's mother and sisters. Mrs. Morel "was a puritan, like her father, high-minded, and really stern". (15) Elsewhere it comes, "She loved ideas, and was considered very intellectual. What she liked most of all was an argument on religion or philosophy or politics with some educated man" (14) But

Mr. Morel quite different from his wife, is fond of dancing which Mrs. Morel is “contemptuous” with, likes heavy drinking, uses low-class speech and is not in good financial and social status. Mr. and Mrs. Morel each have plans for children’s future. Morel, as a collier, is in no way interested in cultural activities such as reading. However, his wife is in contrast with her husband who wishes his sons to continue his profession encourages them to occupy more prestigious jobs. This deviation results to further quarrel in the parents’ relationship from one side, and more fracture among father and sons from the other side.

Oedipus complex suggests a tied love of son towards his mother; however, the relationship between mother and sons in *Sons and Lovers* implies a mutual feeling of love. Due to the hard life of Mrs. Morel, the son’s deep respect and sympathy to her have been exaggerated. But mother’s love to her sons has strongly put any other relation under its power in a way she does not allow her sons, especially Paul, to form a feeling of love to other women. After the death of William, mother does not pay enough attention to the second son who is not in a state of full health. Mother is still occupied with the moaning for the loss of her first son and cannot think of Paul’s need for her. Gertrude who is to waste herself on the lamentation over the first son’s death is saved for the sake of the second son’s love. She has been enormously impressed with William’s death, and it is the great rather unusual affection towards the second son which saves her: “For something,” said his aunt, ‘it was a good thing Paul was ill that Christmas. I believe it saved his mother.’” (162)

Seemingly, there is a shift, a great change in the nature of conflicting factors we call oedipal complex. Mother, in some parts of the novel, shows to be more in need of her sons’ love than sons’ affection to mother: “His mother lay in bed at nights with him” (162). True a patient needs love and affection to be cured but it sounds odd to lie in the bed of the sick son. In fact both mother and son are in disturbance: both are sick, both need to be paid attention. Exactly as she has difficulty in her relationship with her husband, she bears an imbalance in connecting the son, which itself is the result of instability of her character.

It sounds quite natural for a mother to watch her son to grow a mature man. Gertrude, not acting as a mother, but as a jealous girlfriend, cannot tolerate any girls’ relationship with her sons. She has a quarrel with Paul any time he is out with Miriam, which cause a bitter sense of humility in him: “He [Paul] was hurt between the past glamour with Miriam and the knowledge that his mother fretted”. (186) Gertrude’s state of jealousy strengthens more with Miriam than Clara. Gertrude is meticulous in learning Miriam’s spirituality can hold her son away from her more powerfully than Clara’s physical relation. Miriam “empties his soul” while physical passion to Clara is transitory.

## 5. MIRIAM

Miriam Leivers “romantic in her soul” and “inclined to be mystical” (165) stands for Jessie Chambers, Lawrence’s first love in his real life. In the novel, Miriam is depicted as a farm girl who does the housework but is eager to progress and “do something”, that is why she asks Paul to teach her French and German so that she could do more effective works than only housework.

Putting aside Paul’s unusual love and connection to mother, Miriam can be regarded the main reason why Paul cannot stay apart from his mother. Although he repeatedly calls their relation “a simple friendship”, he loves Miriam. However the spirituality Miriam claims and shows enforces Paul reluctance for further relationship: “‘You [Miriam] make me so spiritual’ he [Paul] lamented”. “‘And I don’t want to be spiritual’” (216)

Miriam’s strong belief in religion, which Paul cannot modify, makes the split between Paul and her as huge as it is. After a short conversation about love with her sister, while she was waiting for him, Miriam as a firm believer in religion asks God to destroy and disappear her love to Paul, if there is any feeling of this sort in her heart. RaghavAman notes about the impact of Miriam’s wrong-understanding of religion on her relation with men, “Her misunderstanding of religion creates inner chaos which is so overwhelming that she is seen as a helpless, spellbound being. Not only does Miriam equate love to a wrongdoing that may amount to blasphemy but she also dogs this idea misguidedly ruining her relationship to Paul”. (5) Lawrence’s claim in the novel clearly declares this, “If he [Paul] could have kissed her in abstract purity he would have done so”.(216) Or elsewhere he writes, “It was as if she could

scarcely stand the shock of physical love, even a passionate kiss, and then he was too shrinking and sensitive to give it" (178-79). RaghavAman continues in his article, "Miriam's lovemaking is actually sacrificed for wrong religious belief. (5) Stoll, also "in holding Miriam, with whom his natural fire of love was transmitted into the fine stream of thought," finds her "responsible for Paul's passional failure."(3)

It's true, Miriam loves Paul but she wishes to have sexual relationship only through marriage. The "soul union" or "spiritual communion" is the kind of relation Paul cannot afford, rather it is the thing that frightens him. Miriam suffers a "sense of chaos. She is torn between sacrificing herself to gratify Paul's sexual desire and the mortifying feelings lovemaking will bring on." (RaghavAman4)

Another reason for unsuccessful relation with Paul, from Miriam's part is her passivity. As a passive and less strong woman than Paul's mother, she easily loses Paul who seeks for a woman able to hold and, manage and love him as powerfully as his mother does. Zang in explaining how fond of flowers Lawrence was, quotes him, "A flower is the most perfect expression of life".(3) His abundant references to flowers can be interpreted as desire for the girl. When in his walking with Miriam he cuts and sheds flowers over her head he is symbolically pouring life and love on her. He is in a struggle to unite his own life with Miriam's. It can be claimed that there exists desire for Miriam from Paul's part but "Miriam does not have the strength to claim Paul as a mate."(xxiv)

In the contrary, Clara does not feel "sinful" or "criminal" while having affair with Paul, however she breaks with him because of wishing to live with her husband and that she is regretting for leaving him. If Miriam could tolerate this sort of relationship, she was most probably Paul's first choice. From one hand, the young man bears the reluctance of Miriam and from one hand he has his mother as gravity which consciously and unconsciously draws his son to herself. Miriam lacks the sense of possessiveness which Gertrude owns. Mother finds it her natural right to have her son beside, so she is able to hold her young son in her side. It seems the thought of saving her life is acting as a power which strengthens a normal maternal love to the son, which neither she nor the young men have authority over.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In the paper some hints to Freudian analysis on the novel were revisited. Then, in the harmony with Lawrence's attitude of mind about his work, and since it goes well with the features of a naturalistic novel, it was put in the light of naturalistic critical points. It was told that the novel, especially those parts related to Paul's disturbed behaviour and his mother, as Lawrence himself explains is the tragedy of many young men. However, it was revealed how characters are influenced by their personal traits, social and psychological forces which have been determined in advance. People are succumbed to undergo the internal and external forces because there is no other choice. The paper also concludes that Paul is quite influenced by the heritage from his mother, both in face and personality.

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