CHAPTER IV

THE EXPLORATION\ THE EARLY NOVELS

*SONS AND LOVERS*
Sex, though mystical in tone and source, tends to be the art of D.H. Lawrence in his first three novels, *The White Peacock* (1911), *The Trespasser* (1912) and *Sons and Lovers* (1913). By means of this art, Lawrence delves deeply into his own psychic structures and explores the rights of natural instincts on the background of his immediate surroundings. In fact, these three novels, written before the novelist's acquaintance with Freud, project an insight into a psychological system in which a single state of mind holds the new synthesis centred on personal impressions, and on the themes fully assimilated into passionate experiences. From a psychological point of view, the identical dichotomy in these novels happens to affect mind and body, spirit and flesh and intellect and passion, and this stimulates relationships into a conflict between civilized women and sexual men.

As will be born out easily by readers of the aforesaid three novels, abnormal psychology becomes imbued with the sensitive souls of the three protagonists: George, Sieg mund and Paul. Partly from the modern conditions of their lives and partly from their true individual selves, the consciousness of these protagonists is reduced to the agents of their own destruction. Sexually, they are failures, for, pri-
narily, their psychological passiveness brings about the unhealthy atmosphere of their vital selves, the origins of sex. Thus, destroying the natural rhythms, isolation tears them from their roots, and pushes them into their fragmented selves. In this sense, Lawrence's early protagonists are like Shakespeare's tragic heroes, each of them suffering from a "fatal flaw" of his own. But, in Lawrence's case, the flaws of his protagonists are identical — as the flaws, on the whole, tend to be the collapse of individual psychology. This surely is a major fact in an examination of the aspects of the psychology of sex with reference to the novels of Lawrence.

Besides this collapse of individual psychology, there is a secondary factor responsible for the protagonists' becoming sexual failures. The factor is the possessive nature of the women with whom Lawrence's men fall in love. As a matter of fact, Lawrence's female characters, especially in the novels under study, tend to represent the civilized and intellectualized society as the fundamental background of a psychological split. There is something like the inescapability of predicament in each of Lawrence's male protagonists falling in love with a basically possessive and falsely civilized woman. Lettie in *The White Peacock*, Helena
in The Trespasser and Gertrud Morel in Sons and Lovers are possessive and predatory and they are also the manifestations of the male-betraying age that glorifies them.

This is where The White Peacock, the first novel of D.H. Lawrence, is important. The novel introduces the novelist's "stilted portrait of himself in his half youth". It, again, expresses pressures, needs and origins of psychological patterning by way of formulating the problems and difficulties of Lawrence's early adjustment to normal life. These are perhaps the reasons why Lawrence, after the finishing touch of the novel, tells Jessie Chambers:

"Everything that I am now, all of me, so far, is in that. I think a man puts everything as he is into a book — a real book."

Moreover, this suggests the possibility of tracing the psychological explorations of Lawrence's initial vision of life in the dark struggles of his soul. The novel, as Lawrence himself clarifies, tends to constitute all the elements that establish the shape of his early life, a valuable stage in his inner life. In a letter to W.J. Hopkin, Lawrence recalled:

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1 Begun as Lastitia in 1906 the final revision (under the title Nethermores) was completed in April, 1910. It was published on 19 January, 1911 as The White Peacock.

"I was very young when I wrote the Peacock - I began it at twenty. Let it be my apology."  

With this, chiefly to trace the early psychological tendencies of the novelist, the central plot of the novel may be summed up. George Sexton, a psychologically passive farmer, falls in love with Lettie Beardsall who is engaged to Leslie Tempest, the son of a great Erewash mine-owner. Mostly through inhibitions, George fails to express himself at the right moment to win "the flighty Lettie". She is wedded to Leslie and George falls back on courting and marrying his cousin Mag. Unhappily married, despising his wife, a stranger to his own children, George Sexton, "in a tumult of confused emotions" seeks oblivion in alcohol "like a condemned man."  

This plot evokes Lawrence's basic realisation that man needs woman and suffers when she does not have him. The psychological truthfulness is, thus, concentrated on the unpleasant aspects of this disturbing fact, and here lies the important merit of this novel.

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3 The Collected Letters of D.H. Lawrence, Vol.1, p. 73.

Lawrence, first and foremost, views the Lettie type of woman as basically "ego-bound" and "lesbian" whose passion constitutes "a million frenzies of tortured jealousy" that makes "individuals go mad." She is no better than an evil incarnate to the passive male, like George Sexton, as her attractive beauty only tends to be a source of potential horror and psychological dissociation. Lettie, as John E. Stoll observes:

"The first of Lawrence's possessive women, she is incapable of living from an emotional centre, but only from a mental one in which intellect reigns and from which passions are divorced."

This partially explains the fact that Lettie's outward beauty incorporates an ugliness of her self-division. Her consciousness, her changed feelings and her fixation upon her mental excitation - all anticipate the sadism implicit in her psychological split. To her, all the circumstances turn to be abnormal and even love turns into being lusty and incestuous as her angelic innocence and purity are only a mask for predatory lust and foulness.


Naturally, George Sexton, falls a victim to such type of a woman. But much more important is the fact that Lettie no longer remains a mere woman to him; she also represents the intellectualized world as opposed to the rural and natural world represented by George. This is the reason why Lettie criticizes him:

"You are blind; you are only half-born; you are gross with good living and heavy sleeping ... you make me feel as if I'd like to make you suffer. If you'd ever been sick; if you'd ever been born into a home where there was something oppressed you; and you couldn't understand it; if ever you'd believed, or even doubted, you might have been a man by now. You never grow up ... Things don't flower if they're overfed. You have to suffer before you blossom in this life."

This really implies the tragedy of George. As Lettie suggests in the above speech, George, in order to succeed in life, has to withdraw himself from the old rural world where he has his roots. Surely he cannot do this. He cannot stray from the path of primitive simplicity which tends to be the instinctive and sexual guide to his consciousness. The endless adjustments demanded by Lettie's modern world are but the disturbing consequences on the individual life of George. Failing in this, he turns out to be one of the wrecks of the modern world.

7 The White Peacock, p. 41.
The total effect of the novel, then, derives from the complete destruction of passionate impulses by the intellectualised humanity. In the novel, Lawrence strongly suggests that the normal psychological processes of the self along with the whole stream of sexual impulses are reversed in the so-called modern world. Thus Lawrence's concept of love as a "great thing" (wherein "lies the excitement, the fundamental vibration of the life force"\(^8\) within which "Most people marry with their souls vibrating to the note of sexual love")\(^9\) is exploited under a reeking sentimentalism. This is best characterized by an untimely expression of George to Lettie when the latter is about to marry Leslie:

"The threads of my life were unturned; they drifted about like floating threads of gossamer; and you didn't put over your hand to take them and twist them up into the chord with yours. Now another has caught them up, and the chord of my life is being twisted, and I cannot wrench it free and untwine it again - I can't ... Besides, you have twisted another thread far and tight into your chord; No Lettie, don't go. What should I do with my life? Nobody would love you like I do - and what should I do with my love for you? - hate it and fear it, because it's too much for me."\(^{10}\)

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9 Ibid., p. 23.
10 The White Peacock, p. 248.
This is an earnest submission almost in the form of an existential demand. But Lettie, with her insistence on false morality, would not hear him:

"Lettie was intensely annoyed with him. His presence was unbearable to her. She wished him a thousand miles away."[1]

Thus this entire drama about young sexuality is centred upon Lettie who symbolises the white peacock, the pale and vain bird that defiles the roost, on the one hand; and the raven, the murdering bird on the other. All the unreal relationships without the vitiation of sexual love and all the marriages without really loving are the ultimate results of man's sexual problems, represented by the peacock, the conception of womanhood. All the main characters of the novel are, consciously or unconsciously, sufferers as each of them either intellectualizes or mentalizes sex, thereby driving sinfully the physical aspect of sex underground into a zone of ignorance.

This exploration of the deep sense of loss in all the vital selves of young lives undergoes a change in The Trespasser,[2] the second novel of Lawrence. Basically, the

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[2] Begun in April, 1910 as The Saga of Sisamund the final draft was completed in February, 1912 and published in May, 1912 as The Trespasser.
two novels may be said to have the same atmosphere but the new novel is a definite advance in that here Lawrence experiments with another phase of relationship elaborated from that of George and Lettie, the most question being this: what sort of life will they lead if they get married? Here, in The Trespasser, George and Lettie have become Siegmund and Helena respectively.

The plot of the novel is rather short but violent: Siegmund, a violinist, after spending a week's holiday with a girl pupil, returns to his wife, Helena, and children. In perceiving the unconcealed contempt of his wife and children for him after the escapade, Siegmund commits suicide by hanging himself.

Helene, in many ways, is as destructive as the flighty Lettie; she never leaves anyone unhurt. Thus, in a basic sense, Siegmund may be considered the complete product of his wife who is always hunting for domination over the male potency:

"She had a destructive force; anyone she embraced she injured. Faint voices echoed back from her conscience. The shadows were full of complaint against her. It was all true, she was a harmful force, dragging Fate to petty mean conclusion."

Helena, in this way, is fatal to Siegmund who has no way out except "a preference of death". The reason is that Siegmund's life with Helena, like that of George with Meg, only proves a desexed relationship that drives him into a psychological exile in his inner self. His escape, again, turns no better, and to quote an observation made by Emily Delavenay:

"Siegmund kills himself because his escape, like his marriage, had led nowhere; despite what he assures himself was complete amatory success. Against all reason, and almost in spite of himself, he "feels himself a failure as Helena's lover" and sinks into a feeling of irreparable defeat ...

Helena not only invites tragedy, but feeds on like a Shakespearean witch."14

In fact, the male-betraying Helena, initiating the sexual starvation of male vitality, leads her husband to the suicidal depression. But this self-destructive impulse is largely due to the lack of wholeness in man's relationships within a family, in marriage, in society and in the natural world. Thus Lawrence strongly feels the necessity of wholeness, the integrity of body and mind and of passion and intellect, basically in the matter of sex. This psychological aspect of sex constitutes Lawrence's positive goal—

pel, and here he is categorical, firm and committed. There
is no room for dilution or compromise. Half truths cannot
substitute truth: one must have it whole or keep off. This
positive insistence characterises Lawrence's attitude to
human relationships, a fact which is fundamental to a close
study of his novels. In this sense, Siegmund and Helena,
like George and Lettie, fall apart but each of them may
be considered "a single being whose mind and body are out
of balance".

Now the psychic suicide of the protagonists of
Lawrence's first two novels may have something to do with
the novelist's own youthful problems, "a wounded spirit in
a sick body", along with the frustration, failure and con-
tradictions in the unresolved problem of his sexual adjust-
ment to women. Lawrence, as reflected in these novels, tends
to consider sex as "the actual crisis of love" and human
relationship between man and woman as a form of conflict
that is never reconciled. Scott Sanders observes:

"All the ills of modern man, according to Lawrence,
showed up in sexual relations... for him sex was
the frontier of naked self: here the individual
discovered his limits, as he was thrust by an imper-
sonal force beyond the confines of the ego ... View-
ed from one perspective, sex provided initiation
into society, an acceptance of mate, family and
community ... Viewed from the opposite perspective,
sex offered an escape from the world, an exit
into the pre-social, even pre-human mysteries of the flesh ... Both views of sex are latent in Lawrence's novels."

This really conveys some very relevant facts of biography that bear on Lawrence's basic themes. In fact, in this markedly deliberate form of art, Lawrence projects human conflicts and sexual relations essentially in a relative way.

In *Sons and Lovers* also, human conflicts in which the sexes are at war have become more intense and more crucial, but in it Lawrence is supposed to have attempted to derive a more positive conclusion from his psychological insights. The objective realities which tend to be the basis of *The White Peacock* and *The Trespasser* are virtually taken up again in *Sons and Lovers* and are analysed in more systematic detail. Lawrence himself wrote in a letter:

"**Paul Morel** is better than *The White Peacock* or *The Trespasser*. I'm inwardly very proud of it, ...
... am still at that labour of love.""


16 Begun as *Paul Morel* in October, 1910 the final draft was finished in November, 1912 and was published in May, 1913 as *Sons and Lovers*.

Indeed, full credit must go to the untiring zealot in Lawrence, the endless experimenter, whose labour of love yields rich dividends. This ultimate note is successfully struck in *Sons and Lovers*, and the question remains whether this causes or results from or explains the deep autobiographical outline of the novel.

At least, this expresses the fact that, of Lawrence's first three novels, *Sons and Lovers* best represents the maturity of his youth. It must be the reason why J.M. Murry regards *The White Peacock* and *The Trespasser* as "an imaginative commentary on *Sons and Lovers* in any effort to reconstruct the fundamental life of Lawrence’s youth." 18

With this view, the fundamental importance of this chapter is given to the psychological analysis of *Sons and Lovers* which constitutes, the psychological basis of much of the novelist's later doctrine. But this in no way deviates from the psychological significance of the preceding novels of Lawrence.

The basis of *Sons and Lovers* is best expressed by Lawrence himself in a letter to Edward Garnett:

"A woman of character and refinement goes into the lower class, and has no satisfaction in her own life. She has had a passion for her husband, so the children are born of passion, and have heaps of vitality. But as her sons grow up she selects them as lovers—first the eldest, then the second. These sons are urged into life by their reciprocal love of their mother urged on and on. But when they come to manhood, they can't love, because their mother is the strongest power in their lives, and holds them...

As soon as the young men come into contact with women, there's a split. William (the first son) gives his sex to a frivole, and his mother holds his soul. The next son gets a woman who fights for his soul—fights his mother. The son loves the mother—all the sons hate and are jealous of the father. The battle goes on between the mother and the girl, with the son as object. The mother gradually proves stronger, because of the tie of blood. The son decides to leave his soul in his mother's hands... He gets passion. Then the split begins to tell again. But, almost unconsciously, the mother realises what is the matter, and begins to die. The son casts off his mistress, attends to his mother dying. He is left in the end, gasped of everything, with the drift towards death."

In the same letter Lawrence continued:

"It is a great tragedy... the tragedy of thousands of young men in England... I have patiently and laboriously constructed that novel."

Indeed, the novel is a great tragedy. In it Lawrence's quest for probing the collapse of the vital self in relation with human relationships tends to begin with


20 Ibid., p. 161.
the exploration of Paul’s abnormal psychology and in it, conditionally, sex is the pivot in that everything else of any consequence is made to veer round it.

The ruling idea of the crux of the tragedy is the wastage of the best in men and women as first shown in the married life of the Morels. As in most of Lawrence’s later novels, the marriage of Walter Morel and Gertrude Morel in Sons and Lovers is not the end; it only marks the beginning of sexual crisis which springs from a growing awareness of different identities. Lawrence holds the notion that marriage, under normal circumstances, must be “a true freedom because it is a true fulfilment, for man, woman, and children.” 21 But the married life of the Morels has revealed that “Nothing is as bad as a marriage that’s a hopeless failure.” 22

In fact, sexual attraction binds the Morels together right from their first meeting at a Christmas party. Gertrude Morel is deeply impressed by Walter Morel’s manly traits of which she has nothing in herself. What she sees in him as he dances is evident from this amount of his irresistible manliness:


22 D.H. Lawrence, Sons and Lovers (First Indian Publication, New Delhi, rpt. 1981), p. 141.
"He was well set-up, erect, and very smart. He had wavy black hair that shone again, and a vigorous black beard that had never been shaved. His cheeks were ruddy, and his red, moist mouth was noticeable because he laughed so often and so heartily. He had that rare thing, a rich, ringing laugh."

Gertrud: Morel confirms herself, as she watches him fascinated:

"He was so full of colour and animation, his voice ran so easily into comic grotesque, he was so ready and so pleasant with everybody... (He had) soft, non-intellectual, warm, a kind of gamboling... and his face the flower of his body, ruddy, with tumbled black hair... She thought him rather wonderful, never having met anyone like him."

To Walter Morel also, she is fatally fascinating:

"She herself was opposite. She had a curious, receptive mind... 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..."

In her person she was rather small and delicate, with a large brow, and dropping bunches of brown silk curls... She was still perfectly intact, deeply religious, and full of beautiful candour...

She was a puritan... high-minded, and really stern.

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All these descriptions suggest that the Morels become sexually inclined to each other when they explore the male and female potencies in each other. Walter Morel, thus, seems "melted away" before Gertrude Morel to whom his "sensuous flame of life, that flowed off his flesh like the flame from a candle" seems "something wonderful, beyond her." 26

In other words, sex as a power in itself radiates through them, opening "a new tract of life" with a touch of appeal in their "pure humility." Sex, no doubt, consummates their union. But ironically, this is not the end of the story, but a beginning, the beginning of an agonising tale of disillusionment. Just why does all the aura of charm deteriorate into disenchantment? One must go on to answer this question squarely as it is fundamental to the psychology of sex.

Perhaps the marriage of the Morels tends to be a marriage between passion and intellect, between body and mind and between sexuality and spirituality. The two are such as always tend to remain two; they cannot become one. Walter Morel is the embodiment of sex representing the 26

natural conditions of "the Bottoms", whereas Gertrude
Morel represents the intellectualized world that has
struck on sex. Emotional conflicts are born out of this
marriage. Before the marriage, they find their own iden-
tities unknown to each other but after the marriage, they
come to explore their true selves as also the aspects of
the psychological maladjustment between them. Thus, for
Lawrence, the act of sexual coition is central. To add
a statement made by Frederick J. Hoffmann:

"It's the point of sexual relationship which
enables man and woman to go to the deepest sou-
crees of their natures, and thus to understand
themselves and to know clearly their separate
and contemporary roles."

"This confirms the fact that the conflict between
Mr Morel and Mrs Morel is, in essence, a conflict of
cross polarity after the complete breakdown of 'otherness',
the involvement of opposites in which the male and the
female live by their very natures.

By 'polarity', Lawrence means the proper rela-
tion between the opposites. At bottom, it implies the
completed fulfilment in sexual experience and, to quote
the remark by Graham Houghton:

27 Frederick J. Hoffmann, 'Lawrence's Quarrel with
Sex', Fraudulence and the Literary Mind, p. 166.
"It (polarity) may be achieved, both between individuals and between psychic forces within the individuals, as the prolonged conflict is transcended, as a state of still tension, life-sustaining and life-creating, forbidding forever the merging of the opposites, and maintaining both in a state of mutual contemporary balance."

Now polarity in sex, let it be admitted in all fairness, cannot be achieved by the Morels. Ambivalence in their social standing pushes them out of the basic physical balance. Mrs Morel, as a pure product of a puritan environment, holds the conviction that anything to do with love or sex is shameful, unsafe and socially unclean. Thus she fails to live within the orbit of her husband's "sensitive flame" and in her attempts to reform the primitive instinct of Walter Morel, she unknowingly, represses his sexuality. Tragically, she fails herself as she fails her husband; and

"The pity was, she was too much his opposite. She could not be content with the little he might be; she would have him the much that he ought to be. So, in seeking to make him notiler than he could be, she destroyed him. She injured and hurt and scarred herself..."


29 *Sons and Lovers*, p. 32.
It should not be hard to see that Mrs. Morel, as one of the Laurentian females, plays the villain of the piece; the whole tragedy of the novel is mostly of her own making. As she denies the sex of her husband in turning her own sex 'a function or an instrument of power', she tends to destroy all the possibilities of life around her.

In fact, what she gradually began to suffer from was essentially the complex of the culturally superior being, what started inhibiting the fascinated lover in her was her growing conviction that she had blundered into a wrong choice, something that was doomed to debase her day by day. This sense of self-condemnation ate into her vitals and she found herself unable to condone herself. But to Lawrence she now appears utterly deformed and fatally inhibited. She has exchanged refinement for sex, for love, which is an insult to the body. She must atone for it by shedding her self; she must pass into nonexistence.

What is more, from a purely psychological point of view, Paul Morel, at the time of his birth, inherits the dark turmoil of the confused minds and feelings of his parents. In other words, the parenting process of the Morels has a profound impact on the psychological make-up
of their son, Paul, for the reason that their sexual involvement is essentially

"an act of love which is a passing of the self into a pure relationship with the other, something new and creative in the coming together of the lovers, in their creative spirit, before a new child can be born: a new flower in y° before there can be a new seed of a child."

This pinpoints the fact that the question on the prerequisites of the early psychological malformation of Paul becomes a problem of real importance. As a matter of fact, Paul turns out to be a failure in all his emotional adjustments to love, to the family and to the social relationships. This failure, of course, is rooted in the conception of his birth. This is his inheritance, his inherited personality as well as predicament. All the problems responsible for the Morels' psychological exile from each other must occupy a central place in the psychological make-up of Paul. An embodiment of the dual complexities of his parents, Paul is born an introvert, with perhaps an instinct for suffering.

Here it must be noted that Paul was born before and after his parents' psychological split between 'blood consciousness' and mind.

consciousness' and between 'blood knowledge' and 'mind knowledge.' Lawrence is extremely critical of making anything unconscious mentally conscious in such a way that blood feels itself destroyed as and when it is known to the mind. Accordingly, to the idea-loving and puritan Mrs Moral, sex tends to be in the head. In Lawrence's doctrine, sex in the mind is no sex. This is a fiasco, a masturbatory consciousness, the self-abuse or sensationism, "the repeating of a known reaction... not seeking a new reaction, a discovery."\(^{31}\) Thus, in order to save sex, Lawrence urges to bring the two syntheses into a balance so that the instinctual and the intellectual faculties may remain intact with an ideal polarity. But it is obviously shattered in the case of Paul's parents.

Mrs Moral, no doubt, remains the domineering personality in the novel. She remains the focal centre, for her sons and lovers to dance around, cling to and finally suffer from. It begins with her romantic girlhood and ends in her death. We are deeply involved in what happens to her for the simple reason that she appears to be the

Foundation of all the relationships and of all the defeats suffered by the collapsing personalities - her husband and her sons. Her married life and her death give forth the deepest pathos and most complex presentation in the novel. This is why Jessie Chambers rightly remarks: "In Sons and Lovers, Lawrence handed his mother the laurels of victory." 32

Now this statement cannot be read away as the embittered utterance of a failed beloved; in fact it should help us reach the heart of the matter. It relates to the Paul-mother relationship as the pivotal part of the novel. The psychological value of Sons and Lovers lies essentially in the detailed analysis of this relationship. But Lawrence "hated the Psychoanalysis Review of Sons and Lovers" 33 as a novel based on the Oedipus complex. Evidence is on record that Lawrence completed the first draft of the novel before he had become acquainted with the Freudian psychology.

Moreover, the role Mrs Morai plays in the problematic growth of Paul's manhood is different from the universal human fate of Oedipal love. Oedipus killed his father


Calus, king of Thebes, and became king of Thebes having 
his widowed mother as his queen. They were sexually invol-
ved and had a child by them. But king Oedipus committed 
the sin out of ignorance. In the case of Hamlet, which 
Freud interpreted in terms of 'Oedipus Complex', Queen 
Gertrude and her son Hamlet had no sexual attachment. She 
never entered any rivalry with Hamlet's sweet heart, Ophel-
lia. With all her other vagaries, the mother never direct-
ly hindered Hamlet's sexual flowerings. In Sons and Lovers, 
however, Mrs Morel does everything consciously. Lawrence's 
approach is something scientific from the psychological 
point of view, something more enlightening to the modern 
context of personal relationships. Paul has no sexual in-
volvement with the mother for the fact that the conscious 
mother-complex tends to be a psychic event in his soul. 
Lawrence agreed with Freud on certain points as in the la-
tter's finding out the importance of a balanced and harmo-
nious influence of both parents on the child. For a son 
especially, the father ought to be a model of masculinity 
and authority whereas the mother ought to play a go-between, 
that is, between the father and the son. In this case, Paul's 
relation with his parents may be said to be 'practically 
ever parental' as there is a complete reversal of this 
parental value.
"Parents should remain parents, children children, for ever, and the great gulf preserved between the two. Honour thy father and thy mother should always be a leading commandment. But this can only take place when father and mother keep their true parental distances, dignity, reserve, and limitation. As soon as father and mother try to become the friends and companions of their children, they break the root of life, they rupture the deepest dynamic circuit of living, they derange the whole flow of life for themselves and their children."

It examines Paul's abnormal fixation upon the mother and the mother's unnatural clinging to the son as obviously conditioned by both the parents, whose wrong position in the family is responsible for the distortion of the normal attitudes of the child towards its parents and of the parents towards their child.

This should lead into a fundamental aspect of Lawrence's psychology of sex. It is intrinsically all that was vital to Freud. Lawrence is dead against Freud's notion that a child is sexually aware from its early years and the incest motive is something born with the child. Freud asserts:

"Psychoanalysis has taught us that the first object selection of the boy is of an incestuous nature and that it is directed to the forbidden objects, the mother and the sister."

34 D.H. Lawrence, Fantasia of the Unconscious, p.125.

In Freud's conception there is a rudimentary sex motive in a child and this motive is driven by the pleasure-seeking motives originating in the infant's attachment to the nursing mother. The sign of this rudimentary sexual pleasure, according to Freud, is marked by thumb-sucking, biting things and putting them in the mouth etc. Thus the incest motive is born from the first major attachment to the person who ministers to the child's immediate needs, usually, the mother.

Lawrence opposes Freud in this conception. To Lawrence, the incest motives are an accumulated result of ideas. He strongly questions whether this motive could be an unconscious impulse of man. He feels that the incest motive in its origin must not be a pristine impulse, but a logical extension of the already existent idea of sex and love. Indeed, the life of the child begins with the foetus, which is radically conscious but this does not mean that the womb germinates the incest motive in the child. Lawrence investigates further:

"A child in the womb can have no idea of the mother. I think orthodox psychology will allow us so much. And yet the child in the womb must be dynamically conscious of the mother ... This consciousness, however, is utterly non-ideal, non-mental, purely dynamic, a matter of dynamic polarized intercourse of vital vibrations ... a dynamic polarized intercourse
between the great primary nuclei in the foetus and the corresponding nuclei in the dynamic maternal psyche."

Lawrence believes that this form of consciousness, established at conception, continues all the life long. In the same context he stresses:

"Sex - maleness and femaleness is present from birth ... But sex in the real sense of dynamic sexual relationship, does not exist in a child, and cannot exist until puberty and after."

Thus he protests in unambiguous terms:

"Freud is wrong in attributing a sexual motive to all human activity. It is obvious that there is no real sexual motive in a child."

(This observation draws special attention to the fact that Lawrence's focussing emphasis upon the mother - son relationship in Sena and Lovers is not based on Oedipus Complex. He does not accept any clinical or psychoanalytical commentary to interfere with the literary excellence of the novel under study. Paul's becoming the victim of his early psychological malformation is, no doubt, Lawrence's own exploration.)

37 Ibid., p. 92.
38 Ibid., p. 100.
It is not without significance that in *Sons and Lovers* Lawrence has put a great stress on the ultimate collapse of sexual relationship between Paul's parents. In Lawrence's sex psychology,

"Sex without the consummating act of coition is never quite sex, in human relationships: just as a eunuch is never quite a man. That is to say, the act of coition is the essential clue to sex." 39

This implies that Paul's mother and father lead a desexed life that never tends to project the essential, and even parental clue to Paul's life. This causes the complete breakdown of Paul's individual psychology, which, no doubt, is the crux of the novel.

Basically, Mrs Morel's inability to accept the instinctive life of her husband is the cause of her own failure. Under such a condition it is quite natural that all her frustrated hopes and emotional attitudes are transferred to her sons. One vicious bond of sympathy unites all the Morel children; their common hatred of the father, who, in due course, is shut off from the spiritual life of the family. The ruling idea is that the separation from the spiritual life is the culmination of a process that began

with the initial separation, the separation from the physical life.

William's sexual affair with Cyp does not last long enough to confront any sort of emotional crisis or violence. It is shattered by the mother who never wants her eldest son to be with a young girl like Cyp. She never believes "in leaving two young things ... alone downstairs when everyone else is in bed." Yet this is only a case in point, a case of all symptomatic value. It only serves to pave the background for the much more important drama to take place in Paul. After the premature death of William, Paul becomes the object of the mother's erotic life to be served by romantic virility. In consequence, she, like the mother of Don Juan, radiates all the early influences on Paul's life as "a prison and a bondage."

Paul, growing up in a family surrounded by his mother's loving care, has the strong urge to be in other people's company, to share emotions and ideas, to think and feel in accord with the people he loves and holds in respect. In the psychological sense, Paul tends to represent the complete opposite when it comes to his relations—

40 D.H. Lawrence, *Sons and Lovers*, p. 130.
ship with other people around him. The most reasonable ground is that Mrs Morel arouses Paul's 'deeper sensual centres', but Paul cannot find any polarized connection with another person. In this way, the abnormal psychology of Paul is caused.

Perhaps an ever growing lack of communication is of decisive importance in the development of Paul's psyche. It is only gradually that the external processes are internalised, developing within one and the other psyche and correspondingly growing into internal components of each psyche of the two that were in contact. This is how the mental and emotional life of Paul takes shape. In other words, Paul, initially, uses his psychological attitudes only when he is interacting with his mother, but gradually he begins to internalise her, and only after this does he become a part of his own emotional processes.

In the novel, there is ample evidence of the fact that the dark struggles of Paul's soul derive from the violent agony of his mother's sexual failures. Through Paul, Mrs Morel always expresses herself to Miriam, to Clara and to Paul himself. Naturally, in most of his struggles to achieve maturity and independent relationships, the mother always hovers heavy on Paul's consciousness. But
In respect of inward problems, Paul remains rather unconscious:

"He wondered vaguely why all this intense feeling went running ... Paul was just opening out from childhood into maturity. This atmosphere ... came with a sudden fascination to him. There was something in the air. His own mother was logical. Here there was something different, something he loved, something that at times he hated." 41

As a matter of fact, Paul, before coming to the conscious level, is deprived of all the possible pleasures of his soul. As the abnormal psychology has pushed him out of sociability he tends to lose the ground of love as a creative force. As such, he begins to see the worldly things with a different eye.

It is when Paul's strength to love has been wholly absorbed by the mother that his intimacy with Miriam happens to grow out of commonplace circumstances: his own love for artistic work and Miriam's love for knowledge bring them together. But soon a bond of instinctual intimacy is born free their reciprocal togetherness and gradually it develops in "a more subtle psychological stage." 42

41 Sane and Lovers, p. 156.

42 Ibid., p. 175.
Like Paul, Miriam, on her side also, remains transfixed in the influence of her mother, Mrs Leivers, a sex-hated woman having a puritan sensibility. As a result, her innermost feelings are also wholly absorbed by her own personality. Inevitably, Miriam, like Hardy's Sue, suffers from an imposed sense of bodilessness as the body, in the mystical sense of the term, does not exist in her:

"All the life of Miriam's body was ... usually dark as a dark church, but could not flame with light like a conflagration. Her face scarcely ever altered from its look of brooding. She might have been one of the women who went with Mary when Jesus was dead. Her body was not flexible and living."  

This sheds light on Miriam's absorbing love for religion: to her, "Christ and God made one great figure, which she loved tremblingly and passionately."  

Thus in the world of her love, God matters above all other considerations. As such, her love, right from her first acquaintance with Paul, tends to be an exercise in spiritualism, ideally, self-sacrificial in essence. But this is not all. More to the core, she strongly believes in soul communion rather than physical union; naturally, "on the whole, she scorned the male sex," and this is, to say the least, w -

43 Leas and Leivers, p. 162.
44 Ibid., p. 152.
45 Ibid., p. 163.
Here it is noteworthy that Miriam's inhibition of the male sex must be at the root of her psychological abnormality that takes her to her basic inner conflict never to be solved.

At this point, we would do well to underline the fact that Lawrence plans seriously to criticise the orthodox Christian believers through the Leivers family in general and through the religiosity of Miriam in particular. In fact, all the characters of Sons and Lovers are affected by the old concept of Christianity in one way or the other only because none in the whole drama of the novel dares confront the old Christian values. Even Mr Morel cannot raise his voice out of his painful emotions. The basic ground of Lawrence's criticism against Christianity is that the old norms of the Christian belief do not admit of the wholeness of spirit and flesh, mind and body. Baruch Hochman in his Another Eco outlines this difference in the following way:

"The Christian view, following the Platonic, tends to hold that the spirit is in principle separate from the flesh, that it descends into it from without, and that it must struggle to gain ascendency over its sin-disposed, spirit-resisting antagonist. For Lawrence, on the other hand, flesh and spirit are the aspects of the same substance which resides in the flesh, but which is ultimately identical with 'life' itself."

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From this point of view, we may come to the fact that, to Lawrence, nothing is more truly significant than his effectual precautions against the absolute hypocrisy of being very religious in matters of sexual relationships. He strongly holds it thoughtlessly wicked to deny body in love affairs. This is the reason why Paul grows towards the complete rejection of the traditional grounds of morality. As he says to Miriam:

"It is not religious to be religious ... I don't believe God knows such a lot about himself ... God doesn't know things. He is things. And I am sure He's not soulful."?

This underlies the dilemma of Miriam's religiosity. In this novel, Lawrence deliberately makes religion the actual crisis of sex which, in return, tends to be the actual crisis of religion itself. Therein lies Lawrence's exposing the fact that Christianity fails to resolve the crisis it causes. This is what happens to the religious Miriam. In spite of all her tumultuous struggles towards resolving her inner crisis of love and spiritualism, Miriam only intensifies her own crisis because at each moment of crisis she takes shelter in an imaginary abode of God fearfully awaiting his judgement and resolution. Lawrence illustrates it in the following condition:

47 Sons and Lovers, p. 252.
But there was a serpent in her Eden. She searched earnestly in herself to see if she wanted Paul Morel. She felt there would be some disgrace in it, full of twisted feeling, she was afraid she did not want him. She stood self-convicted. Then came an agony of new shame. She shrank within herself in a coil of torture. Did she want Paul Morel, and did he know she wanted him? What a subtle infamy upon her! she felt as if her whole soul coiled into knots of shame ... she stood under the self-accusation of wanting him, tied to that stake of torture. In bitter perplexity she kneeled down and prayed:

"O Lord, let me not love Paul Morel. Keep me from loving him, if I ought not to love him".

Something anomalous in the prayer arrested her. She lifted her head and pondered. How could it be wrong to love him? Love was God's gift. And yet it caused her shame. That was because of him, Paul Morel. But, then, it was not his affair, it was her own, between herself and God. She was to be a sacrifice. But it was God's sacrifice, not Paul Morel's or her own. After a few minutes she hid her face in the pillow again, and said:

"But, Lord, if it is thy will that I should love him, make me love him - as Christ would, who died for the souls of men. Make me love him splendidly, because he is thy son".

Prayer was almost essential to her. Then she fell into that rapture of self-sacrifice, identifying herself with a God who was sacrificed, which gives to so many human souls their deepest bliss.

This psycho-religious essence in the inner conflict of Miriam throws light on the way she happens to isolate her rational self from the reflections her religiosity causes. As a condemned person, "she was cut off from ordinary life by her religious intensity" and "she did not fit in

48 Sons and Lovers, pp. 178-79.

49 Ibid., p. 158.
with the others; she could very rarely get into human relations with anyone."

It is only in consequence that the platonic friendship of Paul and Miriam no longer remains a relationship based on love; it only remains a friendship based on conflicts. In this context, Lawrence explores the fact that without physical intimacy and insight all human relationships tend to be devoid of all the possibilities of life. This exploration elaborates into a doctrine that love without sex has no deeper motivation. This is why Paul, irritated by their sexless intimacy, has the guts to say: "we aren't lovers, we are friends," and repeating the same idea:

"We agreed on friendship ... How often have we agreed for friendship! And yet - it neither stops there, nor gets anywhere else ... it's a flaw in my make-up. The thing overbalances to one side - I hate a toppling balance."52

This implies that Paul cannot love Miriam without sex. As such, he becomes conscious of the need of drifting away from her. But the sense of loving and leaving hurts his

50 \textit{Sons and Lovers}, p. 173.


52 \textit{Ibid.}, p. 225.
...psychic integrity as Paul is aware that his relationship with Miriam is inevitably one of repressed sexual desires and outward frustrations, and both sex and lack of sex with her make him brood on death.

Though Paul cannot love Miriam body to body, she, during the seven years of their psychological sufferings, tends to over-refine the sex instinct in Paul. This sex instinct gets renewed as a new woman, Clara Lewes, happens to hold Paul's blood "thickening and quickening" opening to him a new self or a new centre of consciousness. 53

Clara, "a woman of the people", has tasted life and has come through all the possibilities of sex. Five years Paul's senior, she gives him the perfect sensual satisfaction:

"Clara was kneeling on a pile of white underclothing on the hearthrug, her back towards him, warming herself ... Her arms clasped his knees ... buried her head on his shoulder ... she clung close to him, trying to hide herself against him. He clasped her very fast... the minutes passed, and still the two stood clasped rigid together, mouth to mouth, like a statue in one block." 54

Obviously, such fleeting moments of bodily pleasure are vividly projected under some psychological needs. In

53 *Sons and Lovers*, p. 253.

54 Ibid., pp. 333-34.
Fact, Mrs. Morel's becoming more liberal in Paul's affair
with Clara implies not only the fact that she is conscious
of Clara's lesser influence than Miriam's on her son but
also that she knows he is going to Clara "for something vital,
not as a man goes for pleasure to a prostitute." 55

The fact is that, Paul, as soon as he becomes con-
scious of Clara's impurity, he is fed up with and even asha-
med of his "passion" for her. It results in Paul's conscious-
ness that Clara's casual sensuality is no match for the natu-
ral flow of his instinctual desire. Feeling guilt conscious,
Paul cannot be satisfied with Clara because, in spite of her
giving him sex, he cannot love her. In this sense, Paul can-
not be satisfied with Miriam, nor with Clara, nor with him-
self simply because he fails to fulfil his vital self, i.e.,
the integrity of his mind and body. As M.R. Home observes:

"Miriam fails because she has no sex ... and Clara
because she has sex only. But the failure is Paul's,
he realizes, and since the mother creates the fatal
echium in him, it is impossible for him to integrate
mind and body while she lives. For this reason she
must die." 56

55 Song and Lovers, p. 314.

56 Marguerite Besede Home, The Art of Self in D.H.
This gives a clue to the fact (and this is central to the basic theme of the novel) that lack of sex with Miriam and sex with Clara complicate Paul's sense of identity in terms of sexuality. His failure in winning his own masculinity relates to his loss of self identity. As a result, Lawrence suggests in the novel:

"Sex has become so complicated in him that he would have denied that he ever could want Clara or Miriam or any woman whom he knew. Sex desire was a sort of detached thing, that did not belong to a woman. He loved Miriam with his soul. He grew warm at the thought of Clara, he battled with her, he knew the curves of her breast and shoulders as if they had been moulded inside him; and yet he did not positively desire her. He would have denied it for ever."

Surely such indications of Paul's conflicts and perplexity in face of the internal contradictions of his own being lead us to a point of revelation that perhaps in the drama of Paul's unconsciousness Miriam and Clara happen to play Mrs Morel's role in disguise. Now that he becomes conscious, Miriam is inclined as fully representing the young, maidenly Gertrude (who later becomes Mrs Morel), whose early life becomes stamped on Miriam: "She was still perfectly intact, deeply religious, and full of beautiful candour." 58 As an

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57 ** Sons and Lovers**, p. 275.

emotional necessity, Paul tends to prefer an asexual relationship with Miriam as his relationship with the mother ought to be. But this realization is pregnant with deep undertones of psychology.

Similarly, in the case of Clara also, Paul, during his sexual involvement with her, projects the image of his mother whose life is reduced to desexualization. This, of course, is a psychic event which becomes intertwined with the sense of his usurpation of his father's place along with the guilty consciousness of committing a sin for mixing with another man's wife. Paul feels it sinful because he is always conscious of the sin. When this consciousness prevails, the act of involvement becomes only the mind's preoccupation, and none of the body. To Lawrence, this is no sex, this is only a "perverted act of masturbation".

As Paul's consciousness identifies both Miriam and Clara with his mother, in the actual love affair with them, his psychic norm tends to explore diabolical consequences of an illusion of sexually mixing with his own mother. For this reason, Paul has had no sexual relationship with any woman, as he himself confesses it to his mother:

"But no, mother. I even love Clara, and I did Miriam; but to give myself in marriage I couldn't. I couldn't
belong to them. They seem to want me, and I can't ever give it them.
... And I shall never meet the right woman while you live."

Actually Paul, while with his mother, needs neither Miriam nor Clara. To him, both Miriam and Clara represent the division into the upper and the lower, the spiritual and the sensual aspects of the same woman - the mother. Resultantly, Paul ought to feel quite nonexistent when his mother is dead: "He felt as if his life were being destroyed, piece by piece, within him," and "He wanted to get away from himself."

Lawrence himself writes in the novel:

"His mother had really supported his life. He had loved her; they two had, in fact, faced the world together. Now she was gone, and for ever behind him was the gap in life, the tear in the veil, through which his life seemed to drift slowly, as if he were drawn towards death."

This 'death' must imply the mother, as Paul, in the course of his psychic crisis, is inclined to brood over the recognition of his unending bondage with his mother. To quote Lawrence:

59 Sons and Lovers, p. 346.
60 Ibid., p. 378.
61 Ibid., p. 404.
62 Ibid., p. 398.
"There was no time, only space, who could say his mother had lived and did not live? She had been in one place, and was in another; that was all. And his soul could not leave her, wherever she was. Now she was gone abroad into the night, and he was with her still. They were together."

It reveals Paul Morel's psychic struggle to transcend the mother horizon. Now that his mother is dead, the fading horizon embraces him to the reflections his mother caused. It is only psychologically that he fails to remain intact with the rest of the universe; his mother still stands between his life and all its possibilities creating "an illusion of direct contact with reality."

Under this abnormal psychology, Lawrence suggestively explores an effective clue to the restoration of Paul's ultimate need for a man that the novelist tends to re-establish the very vitality of Paul's psyche.

In fact, Paul's friendship with his attacker Baxter causes, though based on anger and hatred, elaborates into a homoerotic orientation. Though unknowingly repressed, this man to man physical contact helps Paul discover his true masculinity, his long suppressed male potency. This male or female potency is what Lawrence calls the 'vital self' which is not separable from adolescence.

63 *Sons and Lovers*, p. 410.
There is, then, no denying Paul's remaining intact with his vital self in spite of his long encounter with the unknown self. As John E. Stoll examines:

"Paul's sexual life is manifestation of the vital self; it is separate and dissociated from consciousness, it is free from Mra Moral's and Miriam's possessive control. According to Lawrence, the vital self can be disturbed but not uprooted or perverted by the predatory woman."

It pinpoints the fact that Paul's unconscious encounter with the mother tends to mean nothing other than his encounter with the self in order to maintain the validity of the vital self. But the crux of the tragedy lies in its remaining as unknowable. Lawrence, no doubt, projects it at a psychological level:

"He had a life apart from her - his sexual life... he felt condemned by her... he hated her and pulled at her bondage. His life wanted to free itself of her. It was like a circle where life turned back on itself, and got no farther. She bore him, loved him, kept him and his love turned back into her... At this period, unknowingly, he resisted his mother's influence."

Undeniably, Paul begins to explore the positive realization of his psychic integrity after the complete breakdown of his mother's influence. The irony behind it is that he

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65 *Sons and Lovers*, p. 340.
can play neither the son nor the husband in the sexual life of Mrs Morel who confirms, "I've never - you know, Paul - I've never had a husband - not really." It is in this context that his father appears and insists: "Perhaps I'm selfish. If you want her, take her, my boy." Again, there are moments when Paul urges his mother not to sleep with his father: "Don't sleep with him, mother." But neither does he. That means Paul cannot play husband substitute nor can tolerate the parental relationship. Thus he is identified with the irresponsible father as "they were the same flesh." Daniel A. Weiss rightly remarks:

"Sons and Lovers contains, symbolically represented, a very real and physical rivalry between father and son for the same woman, and a very real defeat of the father; and, as a complement to the unresolved residue of guilt at defeating the father, an ensuing love and identification of the son with the father."

This guilt of defeating the father is what Paul needs to have explored right from the beginning of his psychic tragedy. But, for his part, Baxter Dewes opens up this sense

66 Sons and Lovers, p. 217.
67 Ibid., p. 217.
68 Ibid., p. 219.
69 Ibid., p. 203.
guilty consciousness. Baxter, in this respect, stands the symbolic father figure as his beating Paul tends to be an act that Mr Morel should have done to carry his son away from the influence of the mother in order to prevent the present peril.

As such, Sane and Lovers has an explorative value, which consists in accepting the father values. At the end of the novel, Paul Morel may be said to have accepted the sensual and instinctive body which, to Lawrence's doctrine, stands "the clue to all existence ... a transcendent force of existence."71 Thus what happens to Paul at last is, as Daniel A. Weiss demonstrates, "a flight from the mother in the mind to the father in the blood."72 With this great exploration, the father and the mother are ultimately reconciled in Paul's spiritual psychology that opens up his new relation with the cosmos.

Nevertheless, this in no way claims to be the conclusion of the novel. It is obvious that Sane and Lovers does not conclude with a concrete or convincing idea. But in retracing the psychological values of the novel this con-


72 Daniel A. Weiss, Oedipus in Nottingham, p. 100.
clusion sounds very much possible or even positive. In so far as Lawrence's intention is concerned, the conclusion of *Sons and Lovers* will ever remain immensely thought-provoking. But it was in 1922 (only a decade after the death of his mother) that Lawrence, in a letter to Achesah Brewster, confessed that "he had not done justice to his father in *Sons and Lovers* and felt like rewriting it."\(^{73}\) That the rewriting never came to pass, however, is another matter.

Now, towards the conclusion of the chapter, it may be mentioned that Lawrence's early novels up to *Sons and Lovers* are profoundly marked by his personal psychology in search of "a solid basis of actual living." Sex is evoked largely because of the novelist's deliberate analyses of complicated psychic events. Analyses, in this sense, may mean intimate exercises in exploration.

Yet the early novels of Lawrence record the first processing stage of this great exploration, the exploration of the dark province of human psyche passing through self-torturing tensions, distorting relationships that amount to the failures of sex psychology. In this way, sex, to Lawrence,

\(^{73}\) Quoted by Chaman Nahal in *D.H. Lawrence: An Eastern View*, p. 83.
no longer remains a theme not to be explored or analysed. Instead, it becomes an existential essence for the inner life of which a natural unfolding is required.

As sexuality, within Lawrence's system, tends to be the guide to a paradisal state of self-exploration, Lawrence ranks a great explorer, for, "an explorer", in his own words, "is one sent forth from a body of people to open out new lands." 74 Perhaps it is in this profound sense that *Sons and Lovers* is truly speaking a book of revelation, and its creator a prophet, a seer.

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