CHAPTER TWO

WOMEN CHARACTERS IN
THE TRESPASSER AND SONS
AND LOVERS
CHAPTER II

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2.1. PRELIMINARIES

D. H. Lawrence’s second novel The Trespasser, published in 1912, is not an entirely original work. It is based on the tragic love affair of Lawrence’s friend Helen Corke and her violin teacher. It foreshadows the passion of Lady Chatterley’s Lover. (Paul, 1998:17). After Lawrence met Helen Corke, he became a close friend to her when he was a teacher in Croydon between October 1908 and November 1911. Lawrence first urged Helen Corke to write her story after reading her diary and then received her permission to do it himself. The novel is largely based on her real-life affair with Herbert Baldwin Macartney (1870-1909), a violinist with the Covent Garden Orchestra and Helen Corke’s music teacher and was first inspired by Lawrence’s reading of her account of the affair in her “Freshwater Diary”, printed as an appendix in her In Our Infancy, as well as in the Cambridge and the 1994 Penguin editions of the text. Between his rapid composition of the first draft in the spring and summer of 1910 and his final revisions in early 1912, Lawrence’s view of Helen Corke, and consequently of her story, changed. Originally, it was entitled The Saga of Siegmund. Siegmund being the Wagnerian name given by Helen Corke to her lover (he called her Sieglinde). (Atkins, 1990:20).

The setting of Lawrence’s second novel is the Isle of Wight and South London. These are derived from his school mastering at Croydon and a holiday spent on the Isle of Wight in August 1909. His friendship with Helen Corke, the Helena of the novel, is, however, the most important source. Helen Corke had undergone a disastrous emotional experience similar to that recorded in The Trespasser, of which she gives her own
account in her own novel, *Neutral Ground*. Part of the manuscript of this novel formed the basis of *The Trespasser*. (Corke, 1965).

Lawrence began writing his novel in 1910, shortly after Helen Corke’s actual experience occurred, but he rewrote it in 1912, feeling distaste for its “fluid, luscious quality,” and making an effort at form. The hero and the heroine have their week on the island, the reader already aware of what happens there, as the story begins with Siegmund’s death. A young male friend is trying passionately to convince Helena that she must begin to live again. The love-death is foreshadowed and anti-climatic.

The theme of *The Trespasser* is ‘failure of contact, lack of warmth, between people’. The story opens with Siegmund’s escape from his household, for a few days of happiness with Helena, on a long-projected holiday by the sea and tells of seven days in the life of Siegmund MacNair. He is “hero” of the novel, a violinist, a musician at the local opera house, a man getting on in life, who had married a woman rather older than himself, feeling unfulfilled in his marriage and growing older, has fallen in love with a former pupil and allows his fantasies to devolve upon his pupil, Helena, a young woman filled with hero-worship and idealized love for Siegmund, who plays violin duets with her. But there is more than one obstacle to their happiness. For Siegmund, it is his hope that this stolen week with the youthful and idealistic girl will bring back meaning and direction to existence. But on their return to London Siegmund faces a deadlock, happiness eludes them. Helena, dreaming of a great union of minds, rejects the physical intensity of Siegmund’s love and Siegmund does not reckon with the corrosive effect of a powerful “needy” woman on the weak, dependent male. The novel is remarkable for the descriptions of the Isle of Wight. (Turner, 1994:11-36).

Thus, the characters are passive, merely acting out the roles given them. Two-dimensional, they make no real moves on their own; they react rather than act, except for Siegmund’s wife. Novelistic kin to Lawrence’s many miners’ wives; she is sullen, flashing and passionate in temper. She knows
her own mind. She is limited but enduring. Her basic trait is consistency. It is natural that the would-be hero must try to separate himself from her – she has all the good qualities of the mother – to make his adventure into a man’s world. Siegmund has married, young and penniless, with Beatrice, now a disappointed, embittered woman who is dragged down by the weight of family worries, and the threadbare poverty of a struggle to maintain the gentilities she was formerly accustomed to.

Unlike the latter, Siegmund, after his stolen week with Helena, cannot, erase the guilt of condemnation and the excommunication of wife and children. He hangs himself from a wooden rafter. Siegmund might have continued his small indifferent dusty life if not for Helena’s insistence that, as they had made beautiful music together, their lives together would also be ideal. Ideal, however, means unchanging, the nature of perfection. It meant death for the man who was unable to direct his life, but rather expects to exchange the unsatisfactory for a ready-made ideal, static, parasitic living through the woman.

*Sons and Lovers* begins with a fine historical and geographical sweep of the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire coalfield. (Draper, 1976:37).

The 1913 novel was partly autobiographical and was set in the coal-mining village of Bestwood. The parents of the central character, Paul, are Mr. and Mrs. Morel who are a vigorous and heavy-drinking miner and a well-educated, pretty intellectual respectively. We learn of Paul’s successful brother and sister, William and Annie, but are soon drawn into Paul’s world. He is still in his teensworks in a factory producing surgical appliances but becomes sick and spends his time with Miriam Leivers who he falls in love with. Their love is made difficult by Miriam’s intense and religious nature and the fondness Paul’s mother has for him that is protective to the point of dependence. As Paul reaches his early twenties he becomes passionate and makes love to Miriam but this ecstasy spells the end of their relationship. The latter stages of the novel concern Paul’s next
passion – Mrs. Clara Dawes – and her vengeful husband. In the end, with Mrs. Morel’s slow death, we find that the closest and most meaningful bond is held between mother and son. The novel is notable for being the first English novel to be genuinely working-class in origin and focus.

It is clearly autobiographical: “there’s no denying the closeness of the resemblance between Paul Morel’s life and that of his creator”. The novel tells the story of Gertrude Morel, a mother whose possessive love for her sons hinders their ability to establish fulfilling relationships with other women. Lawrence himself had an unusually close attachment to his mother. There are three principal female characters in Sons and Lovers (four if we include Miriam’s mother). The real life counterpart of one of them (Miriam) actually had a hand in the making of the novel and may even have written some passages in it. Another, Lawrence’s mother, is quite clearly not only the presiding influence but at certain points almost the final cause – not only the person the novel is about but the one it is written for. The third, the real life counterpart of Clara Dawes (or one of them Frieda also contributed something to Clara), is a shadowier figure who may have initiated Lawrence into sexual intercourse.

In conclusion, every major character is held in bondage and not all are able to make an escape from their bonds. Sons and Lovers has always been Lawrence’s most popular book and will probably remain so. Stories about poor boy moving upward in life fit readily into the fantasies of self-realization indulged by all readers, especially the young. The novel is full of richly detailed specifications of place and person; it contains two female characters who are beautiful and interesting in very different ways. It is just explicit enough about physical passion to seize the imagination without inflaming it. (Moynahan, 1963:7).
2.2. WOMEN CHARACTERS IN *THE TRESPASSER*: HELENA VERDEN AND BEATRICE

HELENA VERDEN

Helena is 28 years old, a violinist. She is a striking and self-possessed person. She is the eternal Helen, whose face launches a thousand ships in myth, but here only launches her one despairing lover’s death. Helena, like Hardy’s heath, is eternal, because she has not ever really come into human existence. She exists as a type, and so is not really ever touched. Siegmund:

“Smelled the silk of her dress and the faint intoxicating odor of her person. With shuteyes he owned heavily to himself again that she was blind to him. But some other self urged with gladness, no matter how blind she was, so that she pressed his face upon her”. (Lawrence, 1935:27)

Helena’s acid works on Siegmund subtly at first. She has begun his nullification by idealizing him. When he touches her as a physical entity she is repelled. He feels it, and he begins to wither and die in his manhood. It is not Siegmund she wants.

“Her dream of Siegmund was more to her than Siegmund himself. He might be less than her dream, which is as it may be. However, to the real man she was very cruel”. (Lawrence, 1935:35)

Helena loves the tide-pools and refuses to climb away from the incoming of the tide. She and the sea are coeval, but the blind Siegmund continues to marvel at her “fragility” and Siegmund had been a trespasser. Like Acteon observing Diana at her bath, torn to bits by his own dogs, Siegmund was destroyed by his family and his weakness, too weak to face the unleashed, naked power of the female. It is a foolish man who goes weaponless, as far as his psyche is concerned, into the bacchanalian mysteries of the goddess,
the wild abandon of the woman who dismembers even her own son during her crisis. (Elsenstein, 1974:33).

Helena is the sort of woman who for centuries ‘has been rejecting the animal in humanity, till now her dreams are abstract, and full of fantasy, and her blood runs in bondage, and her kindness is full of cruelty.’ Helena searches for psychic sensation in physical experience, and the search kills. Helena allows Siegmund to take her sexually, but then she rebuffs him so that he should not feel any independent male victory over her, or even a sense of male potency. Then instead of rejecting him outright, she thrusts on him a lavish humility, a “mea culpa”, so fervent that he is ashamed of his desire. He backs off even as she withdraws from him. Then on the rebound, he comes washing up to give her that neuter sensitivity of “soul” she seems to want. But every ebb and flow weakens him more. Neither Helena nor Siegmund reach to the center of things, and a sympathetic study of the wife, Beatrice, might make out a good case for her point of view, in spite of the absence from it the light of any love, save self-love.

**BEATRICE**

Beatrice is Siegmund’s wife, a strong-willed and proud woman, to whom he has been married for over twenty years, and with whom he has an empty, unhappy life. Beatrice is ‘of good family, had been brought up like a lady, educated in a convent school in France’. The reader who associates this kind of background with a prudish and unadventurous attitude to life is not immediately proved right; the story of their elopement as young lovers, both in their teens, is full of romance. But there is a distance between young Siegmund and Beatrice from their earliest acquaintance. Beatrice was quite good-looking as well as educated, and he thought much of her; ‘I thought she was miles above me’. He remembers her countenance, her great, dark eyes as she looked at him, and they ‘seemed to have formed an alliance in that look’: she was the other half of Siegmund’s consciousness, and he of
hers. Siegmund felt ‘very romantic, fearfully emotional, and the soul of
honour.’ They eloped to Brighton, to get married. ‘It’s funny’, says
Siegmund as he later tells this story to Helena, ‘but that Beatrice is as dead
– ay, far more dead than Dante’s. And I am not that young fool, not a bit.’

Beatrice and Siegmund would never have been able to make their marriage
work, as deep down they live in different worlds. Beatrice feels terror and
dismay rather than grief at his death, and the memory of Siegmund began to
fade rapidly. She comes to look upon his suicide as selfish and cowardly.
Released from the duties of an unhappy marriage, which she describes as
‘her early romantic, but degrading marriage with a young lad who had
neither income nor profession’ she finally sees her way open to ‘a more
open, public form of living than the domestic circle.’ She is restored to the
favour of her well-to-do family, who advance her money to be invested in a
boarding house for the better classes, and Siegmund’s father, ‘a winsome
old man with a heart of young gold’ scrimps and saves for the sake of his
grandchildren. The establishment in Highgate is a huge adventure, making
the world big with promise. Beatrice is delighted, the children ‘excited,
elated, wondering.’

Thus, The Trespasser has keenly and courageously analyzed the woman of
dreams, the seeker after extreme sensations, not physical, but psychic. As
one of the characters in the book says,

“She can’t live without man, but she destroys them.
These deep, interesting women don’t want them;
they want the flowers of the spirit they can gather
from men; therefore, they destroy the natural man –
that is, man altogether”. (Mansfield, 1981:45)

The heroine-mistress trespassed on the life of the married man she seduces
into spending an illicit holiday with her; the man trespasses in taking the
liberty to go away with his pupil, a freedom that is denied him as husband,
father and breadwinner. Lawrence trespasses on the real story of Helen
Corke, who herself trespasses on the world of Herbert Baldwin Macartney, the musician. The young Lawrence also felt himself a trespasser in the powerful world of established London literature. Finally in the novel Lawrence is beginning to trespass on the estate of passionate and erotic writing in which he was to hunt so successfully, even though it made him a target of censorship and pursuit by moralists of all walks of life.

2.3. HELENA’S RELATIONSHIP WITH SIEGMUND

Siegmund is unhappy in his marriage, and he has begun a relationship with one of his pupils, Helena Verden. The main part of the novel deals with their week’s holiday together on the Isle of Wight. They spend a week of passion and possession in a solitary house by the edge of the sea. The sea continues the dissolving work whenever Helena is not present. As Siegmund bathes in the sea, an inviting cave inflicts painful bruises on his legs and arms. Swimming into an archway that leads into the cave, in a situation patently Freudian, Siegmund imagines sea-women and sea-girls,

> With soft-hair, vividly green, striving to climb up out of the darkness into the morning, their hair swirling in abandon.

But the tide carried him swiftly through the high gate into the porch. The skin-white, full-fleshed walls of the archway were dappled with green lights. The tide swerved, threw him as he swam against the inward curving white rock; his elbow met the rock and he was sick with pain. (Elsenstein, 1974:35)

At the seashore, symbol for the universal solvent, the disaster that loosens Siegmund’s weak hold on life takes place. Helena and the sea melt him down easily without malice; the first battle of the emergent hero is with the enervating influence of the mother-type. (Zimmer, 1950:12). Siegmund will go no further. His is essentially an incestuous union with Helena – his
sister, his mother. He reels before this “crime”, has no choice but to die, fondly imagining that Helena will follow his example. Helena, barely on the threshold of consciousness herself, cannot choose not to be any more than Siegmund can choose to become. Her pull for the man, the intoxicating Circe – element, is too great.

Helena’s identification is with Mother and with sea and sun, but also with night, the womb of things. On a long walk, night overtakes the couple, making Siegmund uneasy, but for Helena, “All places in that large fair night were home and welcome to her. She asked for the full black night that would obliterate everything save Siegmund”. He feels sharp reminder of her weight in the dark, when they lain down: “He was reminded by a sudden pain in his leg how much her hand had been pressing on him. He held his breath from pain”. The love-death that follows is frightful in its intensity and in the male’s utter abandonment of his individual self. Siegmund feels like a man “who is being brought out from under an anesthetic”. He projects the trap he is in onto the moon, which seems to be trying to free herself from a pack of wolves. He himself is being ended by the eternal feminine, which is using him impersonally, and which will soon throw him away like a used-up dispensable husk.

Once Siegmund speaks to the stranger of women, as through knowing what the woman is doing to Siegmund: “She can’t live without us, but she destroys us. These deep interesting women don’t want us; they want the flowers of the spirit they can gather of us. We, as natural men, are more or less degrading to them and to their love of us; therefore they destroy the natural man in us – that is, us altogether”. Women, the stranger implies, is like the Greek goddess-serpent Lamia, who lay with young men and sucked their blood while they slept. Siegmund, of course, rejects these prophecies from the irritating man. He retreats into a wave of petulant narcissism.

This discussion may seem to be unfair to Helena. Helena is Helen whether she wills it or not. She was born to test and swallow men if they hail her. It
cannot be pleasant to be Medusa or Lamia or Earth Mother if one has hopes of being a single woman, not a divine principle.

With unobtrusive art Lawrence scatters hints of Siegmund’s unstrung nerves, of his brain sick with overwrought tension, of his morbid susceptibility to gloomy ideas. When most full of joy he is accessible to sudden revulsions of disgust at life’s blankness. As the hour of enforced separation draws near he is assailed by an accelerating horror. His physical collapse, with a sun-stroke hinted, is manifest in his speech and bearing. He drags himself across London at night to his suburban home, where he is greeted by his wife and children with frigid, insulting silence. The story itself – the narrative of a passion that took a man away from a wretched home and of his miserable return when holiday time was over – is a revolting tragedy.

The account of this single week, marked by no other events than the various stages of satiety, fills two-thirds of the volume. It is very long, the story of such a love. The final third contains the return of Siegmund to his family; the increasing hostility of children already grown; the feeling of shame, desolation and misery in this household in which the wife, the mother, without revolting, is submerged by her sorrow: the inexorable and furtive approach of the catastrophe; the suicide of Siegmund – all this is of the first order. Helena takes another lover in the same manner, with the same gesture, that she took Siegmund. The woman forgets. The man dies.

In *The Trespasser*, Siegmund’s passion for Helena is similarly described:

“...The changes in him were deeper, like alteration in his tissue. His new buds came slowly, and were of a fresh type”.

(Mansfield, 1981:93)

The lovers appear united, but are quickly divided by their natures Lawrence examines a collision between old and emergent forms of being, but refuses to sentimentalize their defeat into a sad romantic tragedy.
There is something inartistic in the degree of absorption with which Lawrence follows the trespassers past every flower and tree and into every nook and cranny of their forbidden wood. Siegmund returns, with a touch of sunstroke, to his family, now all, down to the little girl he loved, taking their cue from his wife and treating him as a moral leper. His sickness makes the pain of his isolation intolerable, and he commits suicide. Several months after Siegmund’s death Helena’s arm, strangely enough, still flamed with the sunburn, which she caught on her Isle of Wight holiday, describes herself as a tree unable to shed its dead leaves. Helena, after a year’s poignant anguish and exaggerated listlessness, allows herself to be given rest, warmth and comfort to another love Cecil Byrne. Siegmund is sacrificed to his women-folk, and especially to Helena, who is revealed in the twice-repeated allegory:

“She was no swimmer. Her endless delight was to explore, to discover small treasures. For her the world was still a great wonder-box which hid innumerable sweet toys for surprises in all its crevices”. (Draper, 1976:37)

The measure of the failure in *The Trespasser* is precisely the measure of Lawrence’s emotional insecurity at the beginning of his career. Although its story materials were supplied by recollection as much as by invention, it took the form that Lawrence’s deepest tormented feeling about the misery of the male-female relationships.

2. 4. WOMEN CHARACTERS IN *SONS AND LOVERS*: MRS. MOREL, MIRIAM AND CLARA

MRS. MOREL

Mrs. Morel, the character based on Lawrence’s mother, has married below her station; she plays an important role in the novel and is involved in the central theme of the novel namely Oedipus Complex or Mother-fixation. She is a religious woman who is serious and believes in hard work and
adherence to a strict code of morals. Gertrude Morel is a woman of neat and clean personality. (Purohit, 1999:22). Lawrence has sketched the character of Mrs. Morel with great vividness. The various traits of her character can be discussed as follows:

**Her Identity and Physical Appearance:** Mrs. Morel is the daughter of an engineer, Mr. George Coppards. She follows Puritan values, which she has inherited from her parents. She is small of stature with a delicate mould. Her hair is bright as gold. She has blue eyes, which are lovely and searching. She has inherited the proud and unyielding nature of her parents. Mrs. Morel is clever and thinks much. Thus, she has many qualities of head and heart.

**Her Romantic Nature:** Mrs. Morel is romantic by nature. In her teenage years, she had a lover named John Field. However, he leaves her for a rich widow. He has given Mrs. Morel a copy of the Bible, which she preserves for her whole life as her property. She meets Walter Morel at the age of twenty-three:

> “His cheeks were ruddy, and his red, moist mouth was noticeable because he laughed so often and so heartily.” Upon meeting him, she watches him with fascination, for he is “so full of color and animation . . . Soft, non-intellectual, [and] warm.” (Pinkney, 1990:63)

She is then attracted to the smartness and pleasant manners of Mr. Morel and physical attraction leads her to marry him, but when the attraction fades, the marriage becomes bitter and stormy. Her frustration with him stems from the fact that he is completely unable to live up to her bourgeois expectations. Consequently, Mrs. Morel turns away from her husband and invests all her love and energy in her two eldest sons, William and Paul. William, the eldest, is ambitious and finds a lucrative job in London, but dies soon after marrying a frivolous woman. Mrs. Morel then turns all her
attentions upon Paul, the character based on Lawrence himself, in an
abnormally close relationship.

**Her Pride and Egoism:** The romantic ideas of Mrs. Morel lead to
disillusionment. She learns that her husband is a poor miner who drinks and
gambles. As Walter Morel turns to drinking and spends his evenings at the
pub, spending his family’s much-needed money, “his pride and moral
strength” disappear. As a result, Mrs. Morel directs all her attention to her
children, especially Paul, and treats her husband as a failure. But soon she is
proved to be proud and egoistic. She has to face poverty. She has to work
and cannot get time for reading and writing. Illness forces her to borrow
from the neighbors. She gives birth to a number of children. This adds to
her concern and problems. Her husband drinks and treats her badly. He
always beats her.

**An Unsympathetic Wife:** Mrs. Morel proves to be an unsympathetic wife.
She herself becomes responsible for her misery. Her sense of superiority
destroys her domestic life. She does not mix with other women as she
regards them low and vulgar. They are common folk and she has come
from a higher-middle class family. She does not accept the life, which a
common miner can give her. She desires for a better life. She does not wish
Morel to make his son a miner like him. She considers her husband inferior
to her. She insults him by saying that she will “wait on a dog at the door
first” and then him. She discusses politics, religion and philosophy with the
clergyman in the presence of Mr. Morel. She humiliates him by doing so.
She does not feel sympathy for her husband. It is she who drives her
husband to excessive drinking. She makes him feel alienated in his own
home. He is only a source of income. She makes her children hate him.

**A self-sacrificing Mother:** Mrs. Morel is a good mother though she does
not prove to be a good wife. She loves all her children like a true mother.
She works hard for saving her children from the ugly and poor life of the
miners. She doesn’t want William to become a miner. She has an ambition
in life to give her children good education so that they may get good jobs. She realizes her ambition. She becomes very happy when William wins prizes at school. She feels joyful when Paul wins prizes for his paintings. She supports Paul while going to attend an interview. She feels sad when Annie leaves after marriage. She feels dejected when William goes to London and mourns severely for William’s death. She devotes herself to Paul and as he goes into the world, Mrs. Morel sees him as a reflection of herself. And so the two travel together on the way to the interview, “feeling the excitement of lovers having an adventure together”. Mrs. Morel lives each moment through Paul, as though his life were her own. She sacrifices her comfort for her children. She is indeed a self-sacrificing and loving mother.

**Over-Possessive Mother: Oedipus Complex:** Mrs. Morel, no doubt, has strong love for her children. However, her love is over-possessive. She hates her husband as he has deceived her by telling lies. So she turns to her sons, particularly William and Paul for emotional fulfillment. She makes her sons “husband substitutes” – though spiritually and not physically. There are many scenes, which show more than mother-son love. For example, William gives his prizes to Mrs. Morel as a lover gives to his beloved. Paul gives her flowers. They go to the market and fairs like lovers. Paul gives her company as if “he were her young man”. In short, the mother and the sons relationship is a classic care of ‘Oedipus Complex’. It is this Oedipus Complex which destroys the lives of William and Paul. They become the victim of “Mother-fixation”. She has a strong hold on their souls. William cannot marry Gipsy and died illness. Paul too can neither marry Miriam nor Clara. Paul himself says that he will not able to marry any woman till his mother is alive. This comes true. Thus, it is Mrs. Morel’s over-possessive nature that mainly brings about the tragedy of all.

**Lack of Understanding:** Another shortcoming of Mrs. Morel is that in spite of her goodness and intellect, she lacks understanding. She thinks only
about herself. She does not understand the principle of “Polarity” in her relationship with her husband and sons. Polarity alone can bring balance in her life. It means that one should realize the “otherness” of other individuals. She does not recognize that her sons are distinct personalities who have their own emotional complexes. Her lack of such understanding is the chief reason of disharmony and disintegration of her family. (Salgado, 1969:72).

**A Tragic Figure:** Though Mrs. Morel suffers from some shortcomings, she as a whole remains a sympathetic and even a tragic figure. We feel sympathy for her disillusionment after her marriage. A cultured young woman she has to face poverty being a miner’s wife who drinks and tortures her. She has to borrow from the neighbors and sometimes has to accept charity from them. She works like a slave for the betterment of her children. She has to bear the blow of her dear son’s (William’s) death. Her husband meets with an accident at the pit. She herself suffers from heart-disease. Later on she is in a very pitiable condition. Paul cannot marry any woman. Mrs. Morel suffers from cancer. She cannot die but suffers much. Paul and Annie hasten her death by an over-dose of morphia. All these facts make her a tragic figure. We overlook her faults and feel sympathy for her.

**An Autobiographical Figure:** Finally, the special importance of Mrs. Morel’s character is that she is the pen-portrayal of the author’s mother, Lydia Lawrence. Mrs. Morel resembles Lawrence’s mother in several respects. Like her, Mrs. Morel comes from a middle-class, educated and cultural family. She is religious, spiritual and intellectual like Lawrence’s mother. She is clever and speaks good English. Like Mrs. Lawrence, Mrs. Morel is responsible for the Oedipus Complex in the life of William and then of Paul. Both the women are shown as superior to their husbands. Thus, Mrs. Morel has been modeled on Mrs. Lawrence who was a miner’s wife. While portraying Gertrude Morel’s character, Lawrence has tried to
analyze human emotions marvelously so that a reader finds himself closely associated with her.

Thus, Mrs. Morel is present from the beginning to the end of the action. She is the center as figure in many episodes in the novel. She is connected with all the characters in the novel. She is like Miriam – religious and spiritual – and so she hates Miriam. She is unlike Clara who is sensual and so does not hate her.

**MIRIAM LEIVERS**

Miriam plays a vital role in Lawrence’s novel *Sons and Lovers*. She can be called the heroine of the novel. She is the most important female character in the novel and is the beloved of the hero. Above all, she is modeled on Jessie Chambers who was a close friend of Lawrence. We find the following traits in the personality of Miriam.

Miriam is described as a very beautiful young woman. She has a rosy face, black curly hair and free dark eyes. She was extremely charming. However, she was not proud of her beauty. Miriam is by nature a very sensitive girl. She feels miserable and sad at the vulgarity of her surrounding. Her brothers often humiliate her with their bad attitudes.

Secondly, Miriam is a romantic and ambitious girl. She gets lost in daydreaming. This is possible because of her power of imagination. Lawrence tells us that she is a romantic at heart. She considers herself “a Walter Scot Heroine being loved by men with helmets”. However, her brothers often belittle her and so she considers herself a princess turned into a swine-girl. Miriam is ambitious too. She has a keen desire for knowledge. She thinks that she would be respected if she studied hard.

The most important feature of Miriam is that she is sexuality inhibited. She loves Paul only spiritually. She does not like to yield to the sexual passion of Paul. This fact is symbolized by two incidents. First Miriam cannot enjoy the hen-pecking. She is afraid of being hurt. Secondly, she hesitates to swing high on the swing. Both of these events symbolize the sexual act.
Miriam is sexually inhibited and cannot satisfy Paul physically and so he turns to Clara.

Miriam is possessive in nature, her sense of insecurity breeds in her possessive attitude to things. She wishes to grab things. Her over-possessive nature is reflected in her frenzy. For example, she folds her younger brother in her arms and sways side to side. Paul feels annoyed at this show of affection. Miriam has a strong hold on the soul of Paul too. She wants his soul to be put in her pocket. Therefore, Mrs. Morel hates her. Thus, we see that Miriam is possessive in nature. (Lawrence, 1913:121).

Miriam has strong spiritual love for Paul. Paul too has strong attachment for her. We read that Paul allows the loaf of bread to burn when he is in the company of Miriam. Similarly, Miriam allows potatoes to be overcooked when she is in the company of Paul. Both feel attracted to each other. However, Miriam is sexually inhibited and so her love for Paul is only spiritual. It is the soul’s love. Her love for Paul is also religious. Like her mother, she is inclined to be mystical. Her love for Paul is so spiritual that it ceases to be natural. Even when she submits to Paul’s sexual passion, she is not able to overcome her early inhibitions. She submits to him as if to a sacrifice. She lies there like an animal for immolation. So Paul feels as if he were sexless or dead.

**CLARA DAWES**

Clara Dawes plays a short role in the novel *Sons and Lovers*. She is one of the important women characters in the novel. Clara is a charming woman with fair skin and full mouth. Her bare arms and fine shaped body attracts Paul. Paul sketches her arms. Her charm almost tortures him. In short, Clara is a charming, fascinating and fashionable young woman. Clara is a foil to Miriam. Unlike her, Clara is not modeled after any real woman. She is really the product of the novelist’s own imagination. If Miriam represents the spirit, Clara represents the flesh. If Miriam is sexuality inhibited, Clara is sexually aggressive. This helps the writer to speak about physical love
and spiritual love. We learn that Mrs. Morel does not hate Clara but she hates Miriam. This fact reveals the contrast between the two young women. Clara has a typical relationship with Paul. She is a married woman but she lives away from her husband, Baxter Dawes. She lives with her old mother. Paul feels sympathy for her poverty and finds a job for her in his office. It is Miriam herself who introduced Paul to Clara. Later on when Miriam cannot satisfy the passion of Paul he goes to Clara. Clara gives Paul physical love. But soon she remains unsatisfied by Paul. She realizes that Baxter is better than Paul. Paul too inspires Clara to reconcile with her husband, who is sick. Thus, their relationship proves to be too superficial to last for long time.

Clara is self-respecting and emancipated too. She cannot bear her husband’s inhuman behavior and leaves him. At the factory, Clara keeps aloof from other women because of her pride. So other women call her the Queen of Sheba. Clara feels tormented when Paul visits her quarters and discovers her poverty. She also participates in the movement for sake of women’s emancipation.

2. 5. MRS. MOREL’S, MIRIAM’S AND CLARA’S RELATIONSHIPS WITH PAUL

*Sons and Lovers* deals with the theme of Oedipus complex and man-woman relationship. The immediate and main source of the novel can be traced from Lawrence’s own life. Lawrence himself was the victim of mother-fixation.

Here is an extract from *Sons and Lovers*, our first passage for analysis in this chapter. Miriam’s grandmother is ill, and Miriam looks after her cottage while she is away convalescing. Paul spends the day there:

…She was very quiet, very calm. She only realized that she was doing something for him. He could hardly bear it. She lay to be sacrificed for him, because she loved him so much. And he had to sacrifice her. For a
second, Paul wished he were sex-less, or dead. Then he shut his eyes again to her, and his blood beat back again… (Lawrence, 1913:333)

It is the story of a failed relationship. First, Paul desires Miriam: he finds himself ‘blind with’ her beauty and ‘he wanted her’. However, he wants her to desire him as well, and she cannot do this. As long as he remains aware of her and her feelings, he is aware that she is ‘resigned and loving’ with a look ‘like a creature awaiting immolation’. He can only have her when he has shut ‘shut his eyes again to her’. Miriam loves Paul and will submit to sexual intercourse with him, but ‘She only realized that she was doing something for him’. Her mother has taught her that sex is ‘dreadful, but you have to bear it’; and although Paul has now taught her that ‘loving, even in that way, is the high-water mark of living’, these precepts do not affect her feelings. As Paul complains, ‘That doesn’t alter the fact that you never want it’, and she remains physically tense, unable to welcome his love-making: ‘always clenched against me’.

This seems like a clear problem of sexual incompatibility. Their attitudes to physical love-making are different, and Miriam’s upbringing has left her with a deep conviction that it is ‘dreadful’ but must be borne by the woman, while the man takes his pleasure. She does not contradict Paul’s more liberal modern ideas, but she has only learned from him theoretically, and cannot make her feelings suit these new beliefs. Paul seeks mutual passion, but cannot provoke a passionate response in Miriam. Their conversation after making love reveals that Miriam denies her feelings.

Paul and Miriam feel differently about sex, and Paul’s attitudes appear more liberal, on the surface. Yet, in this part of the book both of them think about love and their relationship in a way that is confined by convention, by their background and the society around them. So, for example, when Paul arrived, Miriam was ‘busy preparing dinner’ because she was ‘cooking a chicken in his honor’. Paul is clearly delighted by the conventional gender
roles they then act out. While she cooks, he ‘sat down to watch’; he ‘beat
the eggs for her’ and ‘peeled the potatoes’, ‘carved’, and afterwards ‘wiped
the dishes she had washed’. All this is punctuated with phrases from marital
convention: the house was ‘their cottage’ and they ‘were man and wife’;
then Paul carves ‘like a young husband’. The description provides a very
detailed and traditional division of activities in the home; and the phrases
are filled with gender attitudes. The fine detail of the way attitudes is
depicted: Paul beat the eggs ‘for her’ (presumably because it is ‘her’ meal –
her work, not his, although they will both eat it and it is cooked ‘for him’ in
his ‘honor’).

Their feelings about sex differ, but the description of their divided roles in
the meal acts as a template for their behavior to each other, which bound by
tradition and convention. Miriam lying naked on the bed, waiting passively
is the sexual counterpart of ‘cooking a chicken in his honor’. Paul stands to
admire her beauty, before throwing off his things and going ‘forward to
her’. Lawrence points out the convention in Paul’s courtly lust: her hips
were ‘the most beautiful hips he had ever imagined’. This a delicate touch:
Paul admires and desires her female beauty, but at the same time Lawrence
reminds us that Paul has been brought up to contemplate female beauty in
his imagination, and he now compares her reality with the ideals he has
formed in his shy, woman-worshipping boyhood.

In Paul’s behavior, then, he only departs from the male stereotype of a man
taking his pleasure from a passive female in the brief pause when he asks
‘You are sure you want me?’ So, both man and woman in this scene exhibit
behavior restricted by the limits of conventional gender roles.

There is a clear account of Paul in our extract: ‘If he were really with her,
he had to put aside himself and his desire. If he would have her, he had to
put her aside’. There is no account of Miriam in the extract, except that
‘She only realized that she was doing something for him’; but a little
beyond where our extract ends, Lawrence sums up her state. Paul’s
‘hopelessness . . . grieved her deeply. It had always been a failure between them. Tacitly, she acquiesced in what he felt’. (Lawrence, 1913:335)

Paul is caught between two states, neither of which can satisfy him. When he is aware of Miriam-the-person, he is aware that she submits to him sacrificially, and this cools his desire. He has to see her as an object and not as a person, in order to arouse the sexual, desiring part of himself. So the pronoun ‘her’, in this passage, denotes Miriam as a person and as a sexual object, but not at the same time. The pronoun ‘him’ or ‘himself’ is used similarly, to denote both Paul-the-person, who is aware of Miriam and their emotional intimacy and his desire for sexual satisfaction with her, which is confused with his conditioned ‘blind’ masculine approach of ‘brute strength’. The symmetry of this situation is telling. She is passive and sacrificial, as she has been conditioned to be; while he is aggressive and selfish, as he has been conditioned to be. Both of them, however, are divided from their fuller selves by sex. Paul shuts himself off in order to indulge his sexuality, and Miriam shuts herself off in order to suffer it.

Thus, in *Sons and Lovers*, the man-woman relationship is all-pervasive. It is often described as “a novel of human relationships”. The relationship is expressed through various male and female characters and their relationships, which can be discussed as follows:

(i) **Relationship between Paul and Mrs. Morel:** Miriam threatens Mrs. Morel’s domination on Paul but in fact Mrs. Morel’s fear is that Paul’s friendship with Miriam will effect his transformation into a man, over whom she can no longer have such relentless influence and power. She fears Miriam’s liberation of Paul’s spirit because she senses their spiritual and emotional affinities and is inherently jealous of her possible displacement in Paul’s affections by this young girl. Paul has an enormous capacity to love and be loved. Mrs. Morel wants to reserve that abundance exclusively for herself. In no way does she wish to share it with Miriam.
The antagonism between Mrs. Morel and Miriam in the novel continues to grow unabated, as Paul turns more and more to Miriam for spiritual understanding and encouragement. Miriam, despite her potential power, is too weak to struggle successfully against the potent weapon of Mrs. Morel hold over her son. Against the means, which Mrs. Morel is prepared to use in her relentless determination to wrest Paul away from her, Miriam really has no defense. Even Paul is not aware of how to defend himself against his mother’s determination to retain her control over him.

His mother turns toward Paul as her only remaining hope after William’s death: “I should have watched the living, not the dead”, she told herself. Paul’s illness in a way saves his mother. Early in childhood Paul had sensed his mother’s suffering as that of a brave woman deprived of vital rights: “It hurt the boy keenly, this feeling about her that she had never had her life’s fulfillment: and his own incapability to make up to her hurt him with a sense of impotence, yet made him patiently dogged inside. It was his childish aim.” Throughout our reading of Sons and Lovers, we notice that Paul and his mother often behave together as if they were partners and may be interpreted by their readers as actually expressing incestuous desires: whereas in fact Lawrence is treating them as characters – who to his mother’s suggestion that he probably hasn’t yet met the right woman, his sharp response is: “And, I shall never meet the right woman while you live.” Shortly afterwards Paul learns his mother has cancer. He attends to his ill mother, knowing that she is going to die and that the bond, which has till now held them together must break. So as soon as she has been overcome by death, he falls into a sentimental lover like relationship with her. This has been explicitly stated in the instructive exchange between them on the trip to Lincoln: “why can’t a man have a young mother? What is the old for?” The final scene between Paul and his mother is definitive: “She lays like a maiden asleep ... She lay like a girl asleep and dreaming of her love.
The mouth was a little open, as if wondering from the suffering, but her face was young, her brow clear and white as if life had never touched it. He looked again at the eyebrows, at the small, winsome nose a bit on one side. She was young again. Only the hair as it arched so beautifully from her temples was mixed with silver, and the two simple plaits that lay on her shoulders were filigree of silver and brown. She would wake up. She would lift her eyelids. She was with him still. He bent and kissed her passionately.'(Lawrence, 1913:87).

The sleeping connotations of this make clear the acknowledged fact that Paul was his mother’s true husband. It is a symbolic picture of the essence of their relationship, but purified and idealized. The reality is that his mother’s death comes as a blow to him. He feels all crumpled up and lonely and draws himself together smaller and smaller: “his mother has really supported his life. He had loved her, they two had, in fact, faced the world together. Now she was gone and forever behind him was the gap in life, the tear in the veil, through which his life seemed to drifted slowly, as if he were drawn towards death”. After his mother’s death, at the end of the novel, we remark that Paul’s final rejection of Miriam represents then his unalterable commitment to his mother and recognition of his son-lovership. Out of the ashes of his mother’s memory, he will construct his future, diminished as it must be, but he will never render unto any living woman what he has irrevocably pledged to the dead: his physical, emotional and spiritual loyalty.

(ii) Relationship between Paul and Miriam: Paul-Miriam relationship is one of the important episodes in Sons and Lovers. It involves the hero and the heroine of the novel. It is related to the main theme of the novel i.e. man-woman relationship. The love-relationship of Paul and Miriam and the reasons for its failure can be discussed as follows:
Paul sees Miriam for the first time when his mother takes him to Willey Farm. He feels attracted to her in the first meeting. Miriam actually is scornful of the male sex but she finds a new specimen of the male sex in Paul. He is gentle, clever and sad like her. So Miriam too falls in love with him. But their love grows very slowly and remains only Platonic friendship. Finally, it fails and his steady growth and the failure are caused by certain reasons, which can be given as follows:

First, both Paul and Miriam have different temperaments. Miriam is religious and puritan, while Paul is almost sceptic. He is rational and does not believe in Miriam’s religious beliefs. He has orthodoxical views and Miriam does not like it.

Secondly, Miriam by nature is highly spiritual, while Paul is a man of passion. She lacks passion and she is cold and frigid. Being a Puritan she wants to retain her purity and charity as long as possible. Paul has intense passion and Miriam resists his passion. Paul feels bitter and frustrated. Miriam introduces him to Clara. Paul is madly attracted to the physical charm of Clara. He develops a relationship with her and gets his passion satisfied. As Clara tells him that Miriam wants him physically, Paul returns to Miriam and she now submits to him physically only for his satisfaction. Paul has still the feeling that Miriam lacks passion. He also thinks of Clara whenever he makes love to Miriam. He finds something wanting in Miriam, but he feels cold or sexless when he loves her.

Thirdly, Paul’s mother does not like his relationship with Miriam. She hates her and she has formed an impression in his mind that Miriam will not suit him as a wife. She has told Paul that Miriam is that kind of girl who will suck his soul and leave nothing behind. This unfavorable view of Mrs. Morel has strong influence on Paul’s mind. It never goes away from his mind. That is why he finally refuses Miriam’s marriage proposal to him. He tells Miriam that she is too possessive. She wants to put him in her pocket. She will not allow him to be a real man. He thinks that she will dominate
him and also feminize him. Finally, the love relationship of Paul and Miriam ends.

Thus, in the novel the most discussed man-woman relationship is between Paul and Miriam. They fall in love in their teenage years. Both feel attracted to each other. Paul frequently visits the Willey Farm mainly to meet Miriam. But both have emotional differences. Paul is passionate, while Miriam is frigid. Miriam is Puritanical and religious in nature, while Paul often makes sarcastic comments on religion. Paul is also the victim of mother dominance.

Paul finds Miriam too spiritual, like Mrs. Morel, she is too is overpossessive. As Mrs. Morel tells Paul, she wants to suck the soul of Paul and leave nothing of him. As Paul himself says, she wants to absorb Paul in her pocket. Similarly, she lacks something. She wants to possess the whole of Paul but Paul can give half of him to her. The other half of Paul belongs to his mother. Moreover, his love remains only Platonic friendship. Miriam behaves like a holy nun but Paul wants physical satisfaction. That’s why, Paul thinks of Clara who can give him physical satisfaction. Only for Paul’s satisfaction, Miriam later on allows Paul to love her physically. Yet Paul does not feel satisfied. He feels that only the body of Miriam is ready but her mind is not willing. He thinks of Clara while he is making love to Miriam. This makes Paul reject the proposal of Miriam. As a result, the mystic conflict makes Paul miserable. The failure of this relationship is mainly caused by the spiritually of Miriam; Paul’s craving for Clara and Mrs. Morel’s control on Paul’s soul.

(iii) Relationship between Paul and Clara: As Paul is disgusted with Miriam’s spirituality he turns to Clara. He becomes mad when he observes her charming body. Both of them have fierce passion. They love passionately. But soon feel tired of each other. Unlike Miriam, Clara is passionate. She wants Paul to make love to her even in their office hours. Paul does not like it. Clara too proves to be over-possessive. She wants to
possess the whole body of Paul. Paul cannot satisfy her too strong passion, he cannot give the whole of him to any woman as half of him belongs to his mother. Clara compares him with her husband; she says that her husband loved her better than Paul does. This conflict makes Paul restless. He tells his mother that he cannot continue his relationship with Clara. Finally, Clara goes to her husband, Baxter, leaving Paul alone.

_Sons and Lovers_ moves along a structural pattern determined by the nature of its human relationships. A wave-rhythm distinguishes, in beat and counter beat, the major involvements of the characters: those of Walter and Gertrude Morel, Paul and his mother, Paul and Miriam, and Paul and Clara. In each of these relationships, separate episodes focus – in dramatically enacted dialogue, description, and action – aspects of each character is connected with each other.

In _Sons and Lovers_ Paul Morel is impatient with Miriam’s near-hysterical exaggeration of ordinary emotions; he resents her intensity, her penchant for mythologizing, and finds solace in Clara’s far less complex attitude toward sexual love.

It focuses on class conflicts and gender issues as young Paul Morel is torn between a passionate mother and other women. It has been widely thought of as a simply and directly autobiographical novel by an author who invariably included in his fiction his own experiences and portraits of people he knew. In _Sons and Lovers_ Lawrence analyzes the growth, development of three man-woman relationships. Among the three major women characters Mrs. Gertrude Morel is the most important. Lawrence (like others) usually expresses his true feelings to third parties, but conceals them from the person directly involved.

“The three inevitable relations that a man has with a woman – the woman who bears him, the woman who is his mate and the woman who destroys him; or that they are the three forms taken by the figure of the
mother in the course of a man’s life – the mother herself, the beloved one who is chosen after her pattern, and lastly the Mother Earth who receives him once more as well as other fundamentals such as the relationships between men, women, and the natural world…” (Lawrence, 1913:243)

Miriam is held captive by Paul and by her own lofty hopes and dreams. Paul strings her along in their relationship, with no future for them in the relationship. This lack of future for them may be based on Mrs. Morel’s dislike of Miriam and by Paul’s willingness to always please Mrs. Morel above him. Miriam is also held captive by her own dreams; she envisions herself as a princess, not as the wife of an office clerk. She has aspirations that are unattainable, and therefore is kept down by her own refusal to settle with Paul.

Clara is held captive also, but for the opposite reason that Miriam is: Clara is levelheaded and stable and supporting herself with a job. She is too levelheaded though and will not allow herself to fall too much in love with Paul. She in the end seems to only head further into captivity, by going back to her abusive husband.

Thus, *Sons and Lovers* continues to be concerned, with the relations of mind and body and issues of sub-social and impersonal determination. The novel is consistently attentive to psychological conditioning through the interrelation of personalities, not least, of course, in the relationship between Mrs. Morel and her sons. Its dynamics include (as between Paul and Miriam) the interplay of desire and aggression, the adaptation of postures of domination and deference, and the way in which potentially protean selves are reduced to smaller, more defensive entities.

2. 6. CONCLUSION

Lawrence’s characters are often based on people he knew and events often recall things Lawrence either experienced or knew of. Characters are
conscious of saying one thing while thinking another, and of thinking one thing whilst feeling another, for Lawrence is presenting life as he sees it, as an ever-shifting mixture of multiple selves.

Through his characters, Lawrence commented on the condition of England, on social issues, and also on relationships. In his novels *Sons and Lovers*, *Women in Love*, and *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, Lawrence reveals three important aspects of relationships, and shows his audience the devastating results when one or more of those aspects are missing. When it comes to intellectual, spiritual and sexual connections, Lawrence makes it clear that all of these elements must be present for a relationship to be successful.

We discussed also in this chapter the man–woman relationships of the two novels. In each novel there are men who are responsible for the suffering of women, but on close study one finds them very weak characters who fail in their lives, they are callous in their attitudes towards women and one finds that the condition of men’s life is a futile struggle and fatal in comprehension – or a sense that can fairly be laid. The woman in their lives trying to cope with these kinds, with puritan instincts could be visioned as one aspect of the story. But the optimistic moral, which these characters and relationships convey is that it is possible, by an act of grace to evolve into another phase of one’s being. Stories celebrate the triumph of love and sexual union over money and class.