D.H Lawrence’s *The Lovely Lady* and *Sons and Lovers*: A Comparative Study

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David Herbert Lawrence is an original as well as controversial modern writer. His novels are full of vividness and liveliness through his portrayal of the truth of life experience. His central theme is always personal and related to men and women.

Lawrence was born in the midland mining village of East-wood, Nottinghamshire. His father was a miner and his mother, better educated than his father, was teaching in a school, and struggled all her married life to lift her children from the working class to an upper middle class. Lawrence was educated at a local high school and at the college of Nottingham. He had a very close relationship with his mother; the friction between his parents and a strong connection with his mother is clearly evident in his works, especially in *Sons and Lovers*.

*The Lovely Lady* and *Sons and Lovers*, give a vivid and comparative relationship between the two. *The Lovely Lady*, published in 1933 is a short story which follows a trio: a mother, her adult son and her equally adult orphan niece. The mother is in her seventies but for some reason, she has the notion of being only in her thirties. She’s extremely self-absorbed but she was kind of lovely, and her son is mesmerized by her in ways that border on being disturbing. This story has the developing psychological and emotive angle so as in the novel *Sons and Lovers* where it shows the unnatural
dedication of Paul Morel with his possessive mother, Gertrude likewise Robert to his possessive mother, Pauline in *The Lovely Lady*. On the other hand, *Sons and Lovers* traces, in a chronological order, the growth of its hero, Paul, from childhood to a critical stage in his manhood. It is also a realistic novel developing two significant psychological themes. The first is the story of Paul Morel’s beautiful but terrible relationship with his mother, who gives him all her warmth of feeling because her husband has denied her the love she craves. Secondly, it is the feeling of attraction and repulsion in love, presented through Paul’s relation with two quite different women, Clara and Miriam. On a whole, it is a tragic story of work, love and despair. Lawrence’s psychological insight and the poetry of his style make his work *Sons and Lovers*, as one of the great landmarks in his fiction.

D.H. Lawrence’s, *The Lovely Lady* and *Sons and Lovers* show a relative study based on the psychoanalytic theory. Lawrence work is clearly influenced by Freud’s ideas on the Oedipus complex. His psychoanalytic theory, based on Sophocles’ tragedy, explores the desire of infant boys to replace their father, and therefore sexually possess their mother. In *Sons and Lovers*, it was at the birth of Paul that Mrs. Morel had decided that “With all her force, with all her soul, she would make up to it for having brought it into the world unloved. She would love it all the more now it was here, carry it in her love.” (Lawrence 37) In the *Lovely Lady*, the attention of Robert given to his mother gives a clear intimacy between both of them through their affection,

And then! ah, the lovely, glowing intimacy of the evening, between mother and son, when they deciphered manuscripts and discussed points, Pauline with that eagerness of a girl for which she was famous. And it was quite genuine. In some mysterious way she has SAVED UP her power for being thrilled, in connection with a man. Robert, solid, rather quiet and
subdued, seemed like the elder of the two- almost like a priest with a young girl pupil. And that was rather how he felt. (1)

Lawrence experimented with this theory in a number of his works, most notably *Sons and Lovers*, which covers the semi-oedipal relationship of Gertrude Morel and her son Paul as well as *The Lovely Lady* which shows Lawrence’s exploration of Freud’s Oedipus complex theory, through Robert’s fascination with his lovely mother, Pauline.

Lawrence is considered to be one of the first novelists to introduce the subject of psychology into his works. The novel, *Sons and Lovers* provides a psychological and emotive exploration of the principle figures that is Mrs. Morel, Paul Morel, Miriam and Clara Dawes. But Mrs. Morel is considered to be the most important of all the female figures in the novel. It is she who exercises the greatest influence on her sons just as Pauline on her sons in *The Lovely Lady*. Mrs. Morel, dissatisfied with the ruthless ways of her husband, Walter Morel, makes a desperate attempt to reform her husband but in vain, turned all her love towards her sons making them husband-substitutes. Firstly, the elder son William Morel, later the second one Paul Morel. Mrs. Morel was in fact the one that ended the relationship of her son, William Morel to Gyp just as Pauline of her eldest son Henry to Claudia in *The Lovely Lady*.

It can barely be denied that an all too familiar mother condemning action seems to infuse the story. With regard to *The Lovely Lady*, one cannot fail to appreciate that, just as Mrs. Morel's over motherliness in relation to Paul in *Sons and Lovers* is essentially communicated through Miriam same is the idea of Mrs. Pauline immense effect upon Robert in *The Lovely Lady* is conveyed by Cecilia:

Robert was a gentleman, with an old-fashioned, punctilious courtesy that covered his shyness quite completely. He was, and Ciss knew it, more confused than shy. He was
worse than she was . . . Robert’s must have started before he was born. In the lovely lady’s womb he must have felt very confused. (1)

It is common in the human world that love is the essence of an attaching emotion, feeling of oneness. To state the subject of Sons and Lovers as the effect of the mother’s love on the emotional development of her son is not wrong. The over possessiveness of mother’s love has a damaging influence on the life of the son. This adverse effect is seen not only in case of Paul but also in case of William who is torn between his love for his mother and his love for Gyp. Hence, it is not only Paul who is adversely affected by the negative influence of the mother but William also suffers from its effects more so because he is unable to balance adequately between his love for his mother and his love for Gyp, and dies. The mother’s love has such a crippling effect on the son that it renders him incapable of establishing a normal and happy relationship with other women. On their way to Nottingham, he chats with her and walked down Station Street, “feeling the excitement of lovers having an adventure together.” (Lawrence 90) Mrs. Morel once even confesses to him that she has never really had a husband. Paul’s mother fixation is so strong that he is incapable of having sexual relations with other women.

But what a devil of a woman! She even knew that she, Cecilia, had mentally accused her son Henry . . . He had died suddenly when he was twenty-two . . . because he was passionately in love with a young and very good actress . . . And lately she had been thinking that Pauline was going to kill Robert as she had killed Henry. It was clear murder: a mother murdering her sensitive sons, who were fascinated by her: the Circe! (1)

In contrast with The Lovely Lady where, Pauline, a mother monstrous, as seen through the eyes of Cecilia. Pauline's direct characterization appears to strengthen Cecilia's negative judgment of her. In fact Pauline’s affection towards her son Henry adversely affected Henry’s love towards his lover Claudia where he is unable to balance himself between his love for his mother and his lover.
and dies. Perhaps more crucial is the fact that this brief insight into Pauline's mind confirms in advance the accurateness of Cecilia's later judgment of Robert's poignant anxiety, one which from her point of view is liable upon Pauline's maternal over-possessiveness.

Both the novels give a vivid idea of unhappy endings because of the over-indulgent nature of the mother’s love to their sons where Paul and Robert are unable to strike a happy and unfulfilling relationship with their beloved. In spite of the intensity of relationship, Miriam, no doubt is to be blamed for her sexual frigidity and over-spirituality unlike Clara over physicality. But in the case of Ciss it was because she could not express the feeling she had for Robert. Thus the failures were because of their mother fixation and also for the reason that they were unable to find the mother image in them.

Works cited
