The Catastrophic Consequence of the Psychological Obsession in Sons and Lovers Ziead Dhirgham Mahmoud

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1. Abstract

David Herbert Lawrence was a prolific writer. He was one of the first great novelists of England in the 20th century who made use of the science of Psychology in his novels. Obviously influenced by Dr. Sigmund Freud and his theories about the unconscious mind, D.H Lawrence wrote *Sons and Lovers* which is a pure depiction of this theory. The main characters in this novel are Mr. and Mrs. Morel, Paul, Miriam and Clara. The author develops the plot by portraying the relationships between these characters and each relationship ends tragically.

This paper analyzes the reason that led to the catastrophic consequence of obsession from a new angle—over-possession, that's to say, the desire of holding or having something as one's own or under one's control. This paper proves this view from the spiritual and physical possession; the possession of the mother to her sons and the possession of two girlfriends to their lover.

2. Introduction

2.1 About David Herbert Lawrence

David Herbert Lawrence was born in 1885 in Eastwood, England. He can rightly be described as one the most disputed geniuses in the history of the modern English novel. His thinking was characteristic of his originality and uninhibitedness for he followed no established veins of thought and recognized no customary modes of expression. He has often been criticized as a sex-maniac and his novels are condemned for being formless.

T.S Eliot attacked him as "an uncultured man insensitive to ordinary social morality" ⁽¹⁾. On the other hand, E.M. Forster and F.R. Leavis devoutly defend him against charges of immorality and obscenity and have done much to rehabilitate his reputation. According to F.R. Leavis, he is a great novelist, "one of the very greatest" ⁽²⁾, while E.M. Forster eulogizes him as being "the greatest imaginative novelist on our generation" ⁽³⁾.

In fact, Lawrence was a controversial English writer and that's why many experts studied his work. Each group of experts has their own opinion. Some of them said that Lawrence's novels are known for Oedipus complex theme which is combined by an explicit description of sexual matters and relationships. Others said that his fiction is concerned about the struggle of human beings against industrialized society, especially in his great novel *Sons and Lovers*.

2.2 About Sons and Lovers

Sons and Lovers was the first significant novel to come from the pen of Lawrence and it still enjoys a wide popularity, not only with the reading masses but also with the critics. Sons and Lovers shows a firm grasp of his material, a pure insight into human values, and a vivid awareness of the living quality of nature. It is assuredly his most balanced work and one of the master-pieces of English fiction. It is not mere rhetoric when Lawrence described Sons and Lovers as a great book in a letter to his friend Edward Gernett, "I tell you I have written a great book." (4) He knew better than anyone else, the worth and quality of his novel. Since its publication more than fifty years ago, the novel has received more critical attention than almost any other novel of the 20th century with exception of Ulysses.

Sons and Lovers is an autobiographical as Arnold Bennet's Clayhanger and the first half of Charles Dickens's David Copperfield. Almost all the characters created by Lawrence bear a remarkable resemblance to their real life originals. Lawrence was a tortured soul for the full forty-five years of his life. Being highly sensitive, he reacted sharply, suffered intensely. The children were psychologically disturbed as a result of the unhappy married life of the parents. The unkind behavior of the drunken father united the children against him and they all identified themselves with their mother. The mother too, frustrated in her marriage, leaned heavily on her children, in particular on her sons, for emotional fulfilment and for the realization of her ambitions. Gradually, they grew an unhealthy interdependence between Lawrence and his mother, that rendered him unfit to establish healthy emotional relationships with other women.

Lawrence grew into a self-conscious neurotic. At the age of sixteen, Lawrence had struck off friendship with a girl named Jessie Chambers. Lawrence hungered for her company, but his mother's open hostility to the girl frustrated all his attempts to realize a satisfactory relationship with her. He could neither own nor disown Jessie Chambers. He lived a divided life till the death of his mother released him.

2.3 The Law of Polarity in Sons and Lovers

An individual can come to perfection, can know the divine 'otherness' only through his relationships with another individual. Lawrence believes that the opposites are always in a state of active opposition; the mind, the spirit, the sun, the light are always in conflict with the senses, the flesh, the moon, the darkness. One seeks to annihilate the other. He believes that the relationship between the sexes cannot be fruitful unless based on the principle of polarity. His men

and women are constantly faced with the problem of achieving an eternal balance in their relationship. Their failures are always the outcome of a wrong desire on the part of one sex to obliterate the identity of the other, to possess it, to dominate and over-power it. He believed that in a proper relationship the maleness of man co-exited with the femaleness of woman and the identity of the one was recognized and honored by the other.

2.4 About Relationship between Men and Women

Lawrence had himself once written, "I can only write what I feel strongly about: and, that at present, is the relation between men and women. After all, this is the problem of today. The establishment of new relations, or the adjustment of old ones, between men and women." (5). He wished to reach at the root of this conflict and wished to understand the reason for its cause and a reasonable solution to it. That is why sex-conflict and spiritual one also assume such a gigantic part in his novels. The over-possessive love of his mother imposes an abnormal strain on the emotions of the adolescent and hence in his works he counters, with hysterical violence, any threatened domination by women.

3. The Impact of Freud's Psychology

Possessiveness springs from a sense of insecurity, a desire to assert oneself. The assessment of human behavior was greatly revolutionized with the psychological theories propounded by Freud followed by Jung and Bergson. Freud laid emphasis on the powers of the unconscious to affect the conduct of man. These theories were not only confined to the literary field, but imparted a considerable influence on the private and family relationships.

It is now believed that the mothers could naturally be jealous of their daughters or daughter-in-law. The sons were supposed to have greater attachment for their mothers rather than their fathers. All such relationships were pervaded with sexual undertones. An abnormal human conduct occurs from repressed sex instincts. The old authoritarian pattern of family relationships broke up, woman began to realize her rights and the concept of male superiority suffered a serious below.

4. The over-possessive personality of Gertrude

Lawrence shows that love is often a struggle for domination between individuals, a desire of one person to possess the heart and soul of another, and the failure of lovers to respect the individuality and integrity of their beloved. Mrs. Morel loves her husband at first, but tried to transform him into a gentleman, since she does not accept his simple, working-class nature. This leads to bitterness between them and finally to his ruin, as well as to that of their marriage. In the absence of love from her husband, Mrs. Morel loves and dominates her sons. She renders William incapable of loving anyone but the shallow Gipsy, and contributes eventually to his death because he cannot endure the pressure of loving someone other than his mother.

Mrs. Morel owns Paul and his love; her love for Paul makes him incapable of giving himself wholly to Miriam or Clara. Miriam tries to possess Paul; Mrs. Morel and Paul feel that Miriam wants to 'suck' his soul from him. Yet Miriam cannot succeed, since Mrs. Morel already dominates his soul. The early days of Paul's affair with Clara present a portrait of ideal love; they share a passion and give each other pleasure, yet neither wants to dominate or possess the other. But Clara cannot maintain this love. Eventually she tries to possess Paul and make him need her. When he refuses, she returns to the man who does need her, Baxter Dawes.

4.1 William-Lily Relationship

The damaging effect of the over-possessive nature of the mother becomes evident when William grows up and there is a need to establish outside relationships. He is enmeshed in his mother's love and her clingy personality that he cannot break loose those ties and realize his own individuality. She transferred all her affections from her husband to William quite early in life and took a strong hold over his emotions. He feels incapable of giving himself freely to anyone else. He does fall in love with Lily and really wants to marry her. But since his mother doesn't approve of her, he is foolish enough to let go of her. He insults Lily in his own house and is torn between his hankering after an adult, sexual relationship and the over-possessive nature of his mother. It is a painful realization that his life is rooted in his mother and he cannot wrench himself away from her. This instills a sense of despair in him and he talks of dying. Unfortunately, he contracts pneumonia in London and dies. The mother's love that should be one's strength has become William's cross. He is weakened by it and is unable to strike out on his own and establish his manhood.

4.2 Paul-Miriam Relationship

In spite of its intensity, the 'Paul-Miriam' relationship fails miserably. Not only Miriam is to be blamed for this but Paul with his Mother-Fixation fails to come to an understanding with Miriam. His deep attachment with his mother makes it impossible for him to think of having sexual relations with other women. His infantile development has so conditioned his attitude towards women and sex. His ultimate rejection of Miriam has its roots in the fact that Miriam is in conflict with his mother for the possession of his soul. In fact he himself is averse to physical relations and when he does take Miriam physically, he is torn between his love for Miriam and his love for his mother. He takes delight in stroking and kissing his mother whereas he shrinks from and resents it when Miriam slips her hands into his while they are waling.

4.3 Paul-Clara Relationship

Paul not only fails in his relationship with Miriam but also fails in his relationship with Clara. Though Clara only lays a claim on the physicality of Paul and leaves the rest for his mother, still their relationship ends in a fiasco. In fact, Paul finds Clara to be too trivial and superficial; she is too physical and tires Paul with her inordinate demands of love-making. Mrs. Morel is not as antagonized with Clara as with Miriam because she is sure that her son will tire of her. In fact, Paul cannot find the mother-image in Clara that he looks for in every woman.

5. The Over-Possessive Personality of Gertrude over Her Sons

In Sons and Lovers, the mother is a good mixture of virtues and faults. She is a well-educated woman, strong, tough working person and owns an exceptional intelligence. These features make her overcome the difficult situations. The mother devotes herself passionately to her children and not to her husband, especially her sons.

The mother uses her strong domination powers to control her sons so that they succeed. But this success comes with a heavy burden that cannot be tolerated by her sons. They become dependent individuals. They can't live their own life without a reference of her consent and blessings. So the first son was the first victim of this obsessive domination, then the second son follows him.

5.1 The Over-Possessive Personality of Gertrude over William

William is Paul's older brother. Like his fictional counterpart, Ernest died in London at an early age. William is robust and merry like his father. He's also intellectual and responsible like his mother. He's Gertrude's darling because he distinguishes himself early and remains devoted to her. Mrs. Morel is very proud of William. There is

an incident when Mr. Morel wants to cut William's hair, but Mrs. Morel wants to kill her husband for the act.

"I could kill you, I could!' she said. She choked with rage, her two fists uplifted." (6)

She is a very strong woman and that's why she can't cry. The domination and the mother possession reach its level to control even William's hair. Mr. Walter quarrels with his wife, William is very angry at this moment, he waits until the children are silent then he says:

"You coward, you daren't do it when I was in." (7)

The father is very angry right now and he wants to kick his son. But, Gertrude diverts the conversation and stops the fight. From this incident, we can find that the mother and the son are acting like lovers because William thinks that he is the one who protects his mother.

William goes off to a promising job in London. At first he would send some money to his mother. Then he meets and falls in love with a shallow-minded beauty, Louisa Lily Denys Western 'Gyp'. She satisfies his passion and fulfills his aspiration to marry someone from a higher social class, but leaves his mind and soul unfulfilled. Mrs. Morel feels jealous of her because he plans to marry this girl. Then he is forced to give up her under the mother domination.

"Yes,' wrote Mrs. Morel to her son, 'the photograph of Louie is very striking, and I can see she must be attractive. But do you think, my boy, it was very good taste of a girl to give her young man that photo to send to his mother—the first" (8)

Mrs. Morel suggests that the picture is inappropriate, and that William has been inappropriate and wrong in giving it to her. It definitely feels like Mrs. Morel would've found any excuse she could to not like the photo, she'll never think any woman is good enough for her son, as she says:

"My boy, remember you're taking your life in your hands,' said Mrs. Morel. 'NOTHING is as bad as a marriage that's a hopeless failure. Mine was bad enough" (9)

Some readers think that William chooses such an unsuitable mate because he fears having a woman who might take his mother's place in his heart. Lawrence, in an unpublished foreword to *Sons and Lovers*, ascribes William's death from pneumonia to his internal struggle between his physical passion for a young, frivolous woman and his true love for his mother. Because of the domination of the mother, she deprives her son from his right to love and be loved by his future wife. So the mother was the main psychological reason of her

son's suffering. After her son's death, Mrs. Morel is paralyzed with grief and sorrow.

She is locked in her own dark world, alone, without her hero, William. The dangerously ill state of her second son, Paul, is the only wake-up call to get her back to her current life. Her life will begin to root itself into Paul's life.

5.1.1 William's Hatred towards His Father

William, being a rival contender of his mother's love, gets the worse of his father. He is too young to understand what drives his father to violence and can only see the outwardly British behavior of his father. So he sides with his mother and develops an aversion to his father. He is repelled by his father's gross animality and the coarseness of his manners. The father bullies him because the young boy has supplanted him in his wife's affections. But William can only notice how his mother is battered at times by a drunken father. So he openly sides with his mother and, no one occasion, is even ready to hit the father. He wants the mother to

"Let me settle him" (10)

5.2 The Over-Possessive Personality of Gertrude over Paul

Paul, the essential character of *Sons and Lovers*, is placed on the young D.H. Lawrence in real life. He is a slender boy, sensitive and has an artistic imagination. He is wholly dependent on his mother. He always feels sick and, he doesn't want to separate from his caring mother.

Paul starts working as he is growing up, though he is reluctant to leave his mother's kingdom at house. As a grown-up individual, he starts dating a girl, Miriam. He wants to love her and be loved, but he couldn't. Whenever he is out with his girlfriend, he feels guilty because his mother is getting angry and very furious. It's a very difficult equation; he knows that he should love his girl but at the same time he can't do it because this will affect his mother.

"She is one of those who will want to suck a man's soul out till he has none of his own left,' she said to herself; 'and he is just such a gaby as to let himself be absorbed. She will never let him become a man; she never will." (11)

Miriam is like Paul's mother, she likes to emotionally and psychologically dominate and control Paul's mind. So Mrs. Morel takes him away from her:

"I can't bear it. I could let another woman—but not her. She'd leave me no room, not a bit of room—" (12)

The poor son, Paul, is wrecked because his mother dislikes Miriam. He is under his mother's domination. Instead of acting like normal boys, Paul throws away normal boys behavior, emulates and surpasses his own father and strikes for himself to adventure.

He just wants to live with his mother forever. Meanwhile, the mother has used all her spell and domination powers to prevent her son to love any other girl, because she wants his heart and his love to be for her only. Paul's mind is a complete property of the mother so that he couldn't live at his own.

"But why—why don't I want to marry her or anybody? I feel sometimes as if I wronged my women, mother." (13)

It's very obvious that this strong attachment to his mother is preventing him from properly loving any other woman.

One night, Paul kisses and comforts his mother and tells her that he would give up any girl for her sake. The mother also declares that she loves him more than anything and he is the only person in her heart.

"And I've never—you know, Paul—I've never had a husband—not really" (14) Mrs. Morel whispers.

Day after day, Paul becomes more devoted to his mother and an introvert person. He is a tortured soul with an inner struggle. This is all because of his mother's strong domination and possession. Mrs. Morel becomes an aged woman and death will finally pay a visit to Gertrude and achieve what life couldn't contrive to do. It helps the poor boy, Paul, to free himself from his mother's suffocating love.

5.2.1 Paul's Hatred towards His Father

Since Paul is obsessed with his mother, it is natural for him to develop a hatred for his father because of his brutal treatment of his wife. His hatred for his father goes to the extent of his wanting to forfeit the prize he has won at school rather than seek his father's approbation. Mr. Morel is also apprehensive of some incestuous relationship between the mother and son. In chapter VIII Mrs. Morel confesses to Paul that she never really had a husband, as we mentioned before, and Paul tries to console her by stroking and kissing her. Mr. Morel comes in right at this moment and remarks, "At your mischief again?" (15)

If Mrs. Morel had not fainted, a fierce combat would have taken place between the father and the son. Paul now comes closer and closer to his mother and becomes a husband-substitute for her. She waits upon him in the evenings and unburdens her heart to him, of the day's happenings. They walk down the station, feeling the excitement of lovers having an adventure together.

6. The Psychological Domination of Miriam over Paul

Miriam, the female counterpart of Paul, represents the spiritual side of love that D.H Lawrence tried to explore and offset against physical love. She is a very beautiful and shy girl and because of that, she has rather little self-esteem. She loves Paul so much and worships him for his creativity and learning. They both share their experiences and intellectual thoughts and that's why, they go to library every Thursday night. Miriam was a good listener and a friend and that's why Paul shows his working to her.

"All the life of Miriam's body, was in her eyes, which were usually dark as a dark church, but could flame with light like a conflagration. Her face scarcely ever altered from its look of brooding......There was no looseness or abandon about her. Everything was gripped stiff with intensity, and her effort, overcharged, closed in on itself" (16)

Miriam looks like Paul's mother. She wants to control Paul by her domination technique; her ill-spiritual love emotions. She wants to suck his soul and left nothing. Paul is sick and Miriam feels that he is really weak and can't tolerate the pain. So she would be stronger than him so she can hold him in her arms and have him. As Miriam is really a very spiritual person, she hates the physical world and its reality. Miriam loves Paul in her own way and she can't confess it.

"Yet there 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.'" (17)

The only thing that she wants to dominate and control is Paul's soul and mind. The love and the domination of both Mrs. Morel and Miriam make Paul sad and tormented.

He will be against such kind of love as he thinks that it is a distorted image of love and he wants to escape from this dominating spiritual love. Finally the love between the two couples, Paul and Miriam was destroyed because of Miriam's strategy of dominating and controlling Paul's mind and soul.

Possessiveness springs from a sense of insecurity, a desire to assert oneself. There is some lapse somewhere which makes her so frenzied in her day to day living. Paul says:

"You aren't positive, you're negative. You absorb, absorb, as if you must fill yourself up with love, because you've got a shortage somewhere." (18)

She can't even hug a brother normally. She folds her younger brother in arms sways slightly and closes her eyes in an inordinate display of affection. Paul is put off once when he finds her crouching, showering daffodils with fervent kisses as if she would

"wheedle the soul out of things" (19)

Similar accusation is levelled at her by Mrs. Morel. She says, as we mentioned before,

"she (Miriam) is one of those who will want to suck a man's soul out till he had none of his own left." (11, mentioned before)

7. The Sensual Domination of Clara over Paul

Clara Dawes is a sensuous older woman. She comes to fill in the missing sexual part of Paul while he was with Miriam. She is the reason for Paul to learn the importance of sex and how it is deeply linked with nature. Clara has all the assets of a bewitching female.

Clara is the missing chain in Paul's sexual life because she fulfils his sexual needs that could not be fulfilled or offered by Miriam. Clara feels that she controls Paul sexually so any glimpse of love is lost. Paul tells Clara that he wishes to be friend with Miriam, Clara coldly moves away from him. He asks her what is wrong and she replies: "you'd better run after Miriam" (20)

Paul gets angry and catches her arms and put his mouth on her face trying to give her a kiss of outrage. That is their first fight, so the day ends badly because of that. As time passes, Clara feels that Paul doesn't care about her. Clara begins the same pathetic strategy as Miriam did when she felt that Paul is leaving her. She starts asking for something more permanent and personal; perhaps marriage.

They go to the seashore in spring, Clara's mother accompanies them, and they spent the time as husband and wife. Although, their nights are happy, Clara can sense something different in Paul. He longs to be free of Clara and she can clearly feel this.

"It seemed as if you only loved me at night, as if you didn't love me in the daytime"

"The night is free to you" he replied "In the daytime I want to be by myself"

"I don't know. Love-making stifles me in the daytime" "But it needn't be always love-making" she said "it always is" he answered "when you and I are together" (21)

The same battle begins with Paul and Clara as it happened with him and Miriam before. Clara knows that she will not win this battle as she never has him fully. Clara has no control on Paul's soul. Paul knows that Clara doesn't love her husband although, she considers herself as an official wife of Mr. Dawes.

She is sure that he loves her and depends on her also. So Clara feels powerful and strong as she has a full control over her husband. So Paul's relationship with Clara becomes a boring routine because the fabulous glamour is gone now. Their relationship becomes a want on thrill which is based on pure sex.

8. Conclusion

Different colors of relations are inked and well presented by D.H. Lawrence. There are two main relationships in this novel: the relationship between sons, mother and father, and the relationship between mother, sons and young girls. Such kinds of these relationships lead to a disastrous end. The psychological obsession in controlling her sons is the reason behind this tragedy.

The over-possession is the root and the origin of all the tragic ends. It should be dealt with correctly, not heavily. Possession makes people happy, but this applies for owning things only and not individuals. That's why, Mrs. Morel fails to realize that in order to establish a successful relationship, the divine 'otherness' of the other has to be respected. She also does not understand that her husband and her sons possess distinct personalities with individual emotional requirements. All these factors lead to disharmony and disintegration in the whole family.

In order to have a pleasant life in a harmonious society, we should pay attention to this problem, over-possession. It is a kind of abnormal human beings' love and we should pursue normal and healthy love.

Notes

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- 11- Ibid, P.309
- 12- Ibid, P.408
- 13- Ibid, P.670
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النتيجة المأساوية للهوس المرضي في رواية (ابناء وعشاق) زياد ضرغام محمود

الجامعة العراقية / / كلية الاداب / قسم اللغة الانكليزية

دي اج لورنس شاعروكاتب مبدع. كان في مقدمة الروائيين الانكليز في القرن العشرين بل اعظمهم واشهرهم عمد الى استعمال علم النفس في رواياته متأثرا بالدكتور سيغموند فرويد و نظرياته المتعلقة بالعقل و اللاوعي، وقد ظهر هذا التأثر جليا في روايته "ابناء و عشاق".من خلال التعمق في النظر في سلوك شخصيات هذه الرواية متمثلين بالسيد و السيدة مورال ،و بول، ومريم ، و كلارا. طور الكاتب حبكة الرواية من خلال الحديث عن العلاقات المأساوية بين هذه الشخصيات التي برزت في اثناء السرد في كل مجريات الرواية.

اثبت هذا البحث بعد تحليل السبب الذي ادى الى النتيجة المأساوية للهوس بالاخرين من وجهة نظر جديدة، ان الرغبة المفرطة في الاستحواذ على الاخرين روحيا و جسديا تتحول الى حالة مرضية يقع فيها المهووسون من العشاق و المحبين. كعشق الام لاولادها والعاشقات لمعشوقيهن.