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Mother and Son relationship in D. H. Lawrence's *The Lovely Lady*

Tobi Ete

M.Phil. Research Scholar

Department of English

Lovely Professional University, Punjab

D.H. Lawrence is one of the most original English writers of the twentieth century. Lawrence has been praised for his short stories that explore human nature through frank discussion of human relationships. In his lifetime, he was received as a controversial figure, both because of the explicit sexuality he portrayed in his fiction and his unconventional personal life. Several of his stories are considered innovative examples of the short fiction genre, masterly, and crucial to his development as a novelist. His stories are mostly dominated by the female characters. He was anti-feminist and most of his works are based on his own life. It is said that Lawrence suffered from Oedipus complex and that he could not marry his beloved Jessie. His works mostly portray a single mother or a mother who does not have a healthy relationship with her husband so the sons replace their father. They also show a unique relationship between a mother and a son in which a mother draws all her attention towards her sons only. The mother-son relationship becomes a major theme in most of his works. A few connections between mother and sons can be seen in *The Lovely Lady* too like in his other works. The relationship between Pauline and her son Robert is depicted in such a unique way that it differs from a normal relationship of mother and son. Both Pauline and Robert in *The Lovely Lady* give a glimpse of the abnormal bond between parents and children of the opposite sex by not associating with the other people around them. They live in the world of their own without sharing any bond with their relatives or friends. This shows a unique bond between mother and son.

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Lawrence's *The Lovely Lady* explores Freud's Oedipus complex theory, through Robert and his mother Pauline. Pauline is a charming old lady who is domineering with her money power and so the son is under control by her. Her charm captivates Robert even though Robert did not like her but he was "fascinated by her" (Lawrence 1). Robert did not love or like his mother but was forced to bind with her because she was the only source of his survival. All she wanted was her money, her beauty and her lavish life. Pauline is a completely reserved woman who does not care about anyone or anything else except her beauty and her money that "she could do her youth again like an eagle" (Lawrence 1). She was believed to have a "secret of her everlasting" (Lawrence 1) charming and beauty that makes her look younger and she could become a youth "like an eagle" (Lawrence 1). That means whenever she wants to look young and pretty she could transform herself within no time. However, she did not mean to look pretty and young to impress or to gain popularity. It has a certain limitation too because she did not want to look too young for so many people. It is obvious that she wanted to be pretty only around her son or sometimes when there is a guest at their home:

> She was wise enough not to try being young for too many people. Her son Robert, in the evenings, and Sir Wilfrid Knipe sometimes in the afternoon to tea; then occasional visitors on Sunday, when Robert was home- for these she was her lovely and changeless self, that age could not wither, nor custom stale; so bright and kindly and yet subtly mocking like Mona Lisa, who knew a thing or two (Lawrence 1).

Pauline affords to keep herself look younger and beautiful and proves that she does not want Robert's love to fade away for her. Pauline loves and takes care of Robert but never gives freedom to her son like a normal mother does. She was powerful, rich, domineering, lovely and extravagant too because she could spend her money lavishly in buying and collecting paintings for decorating

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her room. She believes "what was hers was hers" (Lawrence 1) and that nobody could stop her in spending money. Robert earns only hundred pounds a year and that wasn't enough for him to survive. However it has never been a problem for him because his mother already has lots of money and she could give him money more lavishly. If there was a way that Robert could be set free like other boys than it could be without his own mother. He was forced to stay within his home and with his mother which distinguished him from other men because after the death of her first son Pauline draws all her attention towards her second son and never let him do anything without her decision. Whatever he does was his mother's will. So he never got any chance to make new friends or even a girlfriend.

Both mother and son live in the world of their own, they would laugh together, play together and have dinner together. It was believed by Ciss that her Aunt Pauline and nephew Robert have secrets of their own which is unknown to others. They would not share anything to her and to others. Ciss thought that Pauline herself has killed her elder son because he was in love with a girl who was objectionable for her. She has poisoned her own son and might kill Robert too. Robert was believed to have a secret of some crimes when he was in Mexico which was known only to his mother:

> He went up to chambers, and read law. It was, however, all the weird old processes that interested him. He had unknown to everybody but his mother, a quite extraordinary collection of old Mexican legal documents- reports of processes and trials, pleas, accusations: the weird and awful mixture of ecclesiastical law and common law in seventeenth century (Lawrence 1).

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It is normal that people have their own secrecy and it is always shared between friends, family or relatives but in case of Pauline and Robert, their means of keeping secrecy is different from the others. They would never think of sharing their secrets even with Ciss who was the only relative close to them and also who had a little idea about their deeds. Robert, always being shy, speechless and uneasy around Ciss shows the lack of guidance by his own mother. The mother too, instead of guiding, teaching how to behave with others and showing a good path to her son was supporting and helping him to hide his crime documents. The world of both mother and son was not in need of anyone. They are unconcerned about others and they live in the world of their own, unaware of Ciss's presence at their home.

The mother and the son would enjoy their moments with each other during the evening hours like a lover. The chat between the mother and son would be noticed by Ciss who always considered their behavior as unnatural. Pauline's "eagerness to be a girl" (Lawrence 1) all the time rather than behaving like a mother in front of her son is also noticed by Ciss who is unable to interrupt them. The duo would laugh and share some secrets with each other leaving aside to Ciss. It is also notice by Ciss that Robert would behave "like a priest with a young girl pupil" (Lawrence 1) not like a son to his mother. They never felt like inviting Ciss to be the part of their discussion because both of them had become very comfortable and at ease with each other. It is obvious that the both only know the secrets of their discussion. The unhealthiness of the relation between Pauline and Robert is doubted by Ciss because both mother and son seemed so happy together.

Ciss had a feeling towards Robert and she believed that Pauline would like them to marry each other in future after her death but not before the death. Every mother in the world will always want their children to get married and settle their life before they are dead but in case of Pauline it is opposite. Ciss feels that Robert being under the domination of her mother is unable to act against her order. He is so "convulsed with shyness already, with man or woman. What would he be when his mother was dead? - in a dozen more years". (Lawrence 1). She feels that Robert would become

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"just a shell, the shell of a man who had never lived" (Lawrence 1). Robert was so dependent and passionate that he will be nothing without his mother when she is dead. Ciss also feels that Pauline takes advantage of her son's being silent but inside Robert was filled with humiliation and shame. He felt ashamed of not being like other man and subsequently he believes he is "negative in all those respects". (Lawrence 1) He realizes that his mother has not guided him properly. He remains in a state of confusion for what to or what not to do with his future. Somehow he likes Ciss too but due to his reserved personality he is unable to convince with either his mother or even to disclose to Ciss.

The relation between the mother and son portrayed in Lawrence's works are quite different and unnatural. The mothers in his works give more attention towards the son rather than to the husband and sometimes the love for son replaces the husband. In *Sons and Lovers*, Paul replaces his father because of his bad behavior towards his mother and likewise in *The Lovely lady* Robert also replaces his father but it was not because the father treated badly to his mother. Since Pauline was a strange woman, she left her husband without any reason even when Robert was born "there was no quarrel. Sometimes she saw her husband again, quite amiably, but a little mockingly. And she even gave him money" (Lawrence 1). She seemed more dominating towards her husband like she dominated her son.

Robert felt that he lacks the capacity to love a woman. When Ciss asked him whether he loves her and how he feels for his mother, he became very much uncomfortable with these questions. At last he admitted that he loves Ciss but he says that "I am a failure even at making money. I can't ask my mother for money" (Lawrence 1) he sounds helpless and pitiful at the same time. The over caring of Pauline to her son seems to destroy the life of the son. She is too much bound with herself and to the son that Robert is unable to interact even with his love one. Pauline's lust for the power destroys the lives of the others including her own son. She never loved someone truly; it was her power that she wanted throughout her life. Robert knew it from the beginning that his mother needs

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only power not love, but he remains silent because he was moneyless and helpless on the other hand. Robert explains at the end that his mother's lust is the "power to feed on other lives. She was beautiful, and she fed on life. She has fed on me as she fed on Henry. She put a sucker into one's soul, and sucked up one's essential life". (Lawrence 1) He also shares his inner trauma with Ciss "I know I've got a heart, but it's almost sucked dry. I know I've got a soul, somewhere. But it's gnawed bare. I hate people who want power over others." (Lawrence 1). Pauline is revealed as an old lady at the end of the story and subsequently Robert loses his interest in her.

Every mother and son relationship is wonderful in this universe. Nobody sees the outer beauty that the mother or the son has. It is on the beauty of heart that all the relationships are established. One's duty as a mother's is to give proper education to their children and also to socialize them in the society. If they are not taught properly from the childhood, their character and behavior remains the same when they grow up. From this perspective Pauline fails to prove herself as a good mother. She lacks the qualities one mother should have. Her lust for power overcomes the love for her son. Even at her death she left a small amount of only about thousand pounds for her own son, Robert who sacrificed his life for her mother. Her remaining properties went to the museum that established in the name of her own as "Pauline Attenborough Museum"(Lawrence 1). Till the end of her life her selfishness reflects in the way she gave away her fortunes in the museum rather than to shape the life of her own son. Her selfish motive to be a popular woman by forming a museum in her own name proves that power is more important than the son. She could have given a little credit to Robert in forming a museum but she did not. All the credits were given to herself leaving her son's life miserable for the rest of his life.

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