D.H. LAWRENCE’S SONS AND LOVERS AND WOMEN IN LOVE: AN ERIKSONIAN PSYCHOANALYTIC READING

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Abstract

In the study, the researcher investigates the role of parents in children’s mental maturity. As a result, lack of rationality of parents in dealing with children will have detrimental effect on their future. Erikson explored the evolution of the superego and distinguished it among infant mortality, adolescent ideology, and adult ethics. His work, which has enriched formal Psychoanalysis, had enormous impact on the clinical area and had wide application in child psychology, education, psychotherapy, and marriage counseling. Since Lawrence’s works provide feasible texture for Psychoanalytic criticism, the two given novels are studied here on the light of Erikson’s theory. In the Study, a new understanding of modernity comes in through the study of D.H. Lawrence’s two major effects. The thesis, in its five chapters, seeks to trace between D.H. Lawrence’s work and Erik Eriksonian psychosocial analysis. It study is an attempt to cover Erikson’s Psychosocial theory, notably the notion of epigenetic theory and then apply it to the reading of two novels by D.H. Lawrence (Sons in Lovers 1994 and Women in Love 1921). Erikson’s theory posits that every human being passes through several distinct and qualitatively different stages in life, from birth to death. The notion of identity preoccupied Erikson’s mind more than any other issues in psychology.

KEYWORDS: ERIKSONIAN ANALYSIS, MATURITY, RATIONALITY, D.H. LAWRENCE

Introduction

David Herbert Richard Lawrence’s (1885-1930) is an English short story writer, novelist, poet, essayist, and playwright. Lawrence’s Sons and Lovers are considered as the most modern as well as controversial novel. In Sons and Lovers, Lawrence tells the story of an artist, called Paul, who is eager to reach the nature and he struggles for it. He knows that for becoming mature as an artist one should find the reality. This reality will guarantee his becoming a real artist. D.H. Lawrence tells the story of a woman, Gertrude who marries a man Walter Morel, a Collier, bad tempered and lower in class, being very different in attitude, behavior and chain of thought, the couple let their love vanish soon after marriage.

Women in Love by Lawrence shows the acquaintance between the two men that isn’t slight and worked on ideas about male relationship. This novel is an exploration of human Sexuality in days of World War I. Women in Love, is a master piece that announces the erotic consciousness of the twentieth century. Echoing Lawrence’s own life, Women in Love surveys the mysteries between men and women as two couples strive for love against a hunting back drop of coal miner, factories, and a beleaguered working class. Lawrence’s writing is of special kind that leads him to treat them as documentation. They are Lawrence’s personal case and inner history.

Psychoanalysis as a modern concept started to shape in nineteenth and twentieth century by work of famous psychologist Sigmund Freud and gradually developed and improved. In new era, this concept is getting more attention than before since “psychoanalytic concepts have become part of our everyday lives, and therefore psychoanalytic thinking should have the advantage of familiarity” (Tyson, 2006 p.11). However there have been a lot of changes in this movement “During the last decade and a half, psychoanalytic theory has undergone dramatic changes” (Elliott and Frosh 1). Different methods and fields by various people have contributed to this movement and have altered the course of psychoanalysis. Elliott and Frosh (1995) remarks:
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The Freudian theoretical tradition has become revitalized and examined with new interest; the predominance of the post-structural psychoanalytic approach developed by Lacan has come under fire in many quarters of the social sciences; and approaches in the object-relational school, especially the Kleinian, have diversified and in turn given rise to a plurality of methodological positions (1).

Erik Erikson (1902-1994) is considered as a remarkable psychoanalyst and psychologist whose contribution to the development of modern psychology cannot be ignored. His theories share with Sigmund Freud’s (1856-1936) since like him, Erikson believes that the development of personality takes place through several stages. However, Erikson’s theory is more complicated and numerous since unlike Sigmund Freud, Erikson regards eight psychosocial stages in which subjects face in order to develop their personality. Each of these stages takes place after each other and it is determined by specific features and accompanied with conflicts. Ego is responsible to deal with such conflicts and in case they are not handled properly, the results would be crisis of identity. Ego is the conscious part of psyche that the subject has about the surrounding world. Regarding this concept, Thurschwell (2000) remarks:

One definition of ego is the individual’s image of himself as a self-conscious being, his sense of himself as separate from the world which surrounds him. Another psychoanalytic definition of ego is that which is conscious in the person, that which experiences and senses the outside world and which represents reality to the self. These two meanings are related but not identical – the first meaning of ego is more encompassing: it implies a whole self, rather than a self which is split into separate, warring factions, the ego and the id, that the other meaning implies. (89)

A part of ego is able to operate independently from id and the superego. Ego is the conscious agent of personality which is responsible for behavioral, cognitive, and emotional control and it is constantly engaged interacting with different social institution. As a result, ego is affected by social mechanisms and forces (Giddens, 1378, 112). As it has been mentioned earlier, ego is sufficiently significant for Erikson since he has established ego psychology and emphasized the role of culture and society and the conflicts that can take place within the ego itself. Erikson believes that ego can deal with social crises through creating a sense of trust and helping the next generation prepare for the future (Schultz, 1379, 243 and Ericsson in 1975, 25). Erikson believes that the notion of the stages of personality development includes eight periods from childhood to the adulthood. However, for Erikson, the stages during adulthood are the most significant ones and he puts a great deal of emphasis on the adolescent period, feeling it was a crucial stage for developing a person’s identity (Schultz, 1379, 243).

According to the theory, successful completion of each stage results in a healthy personality and the acquisition of basic virtues. The emergence of each stage depends on both internal and external forces and it moves forwards one after another one. Like other thinkers, Erikson emphasizes the role of experience through which the subject develops and acquires awareness and knowledge. According to Erikson, the first stage is very significant and it is regarded as “a sense of basic trust: it is the first and basic wholeness, for it seems to imply that the inside and the outside can be experienced as an interrelated goodness” (1994, 82). This stage depends on the parents and parental training and it leads to the hope. The next stage is regarded as autonomy and throughout this stage, the subject learns to overcome doubt. Erikson believes “a baby may show something like ‘autonomy’ from the beginning, for example, in the particular way in which he angrily tries to wriggle his hand free when tightly held” (1994, 95). The outcome of the second stage is the power of will. The third stage is initiative stage that refers to the development of the subject’s creativity that can take place before school and the result would be purpose and aim. The fourth stage happens during school and during this time, the skills are learnt by the subject and it becomes the source of self-esteem for them and the competence would be the ultimate end. The next stage shows transition from childhood to adulthood and he learns how to belong to the society.

Erikson suggests that two identities are involved: the sexual and the occupational. According to Bee (1992), what should happen at the end of this stage is “a reiterated sense of self, of what one wants to do or be, and of one’s appropriate sex role” (8). During this stage the body image of the adolescent changes.

The next stage is the process in which the subject learns how to maintain intimacy. This intimacy should lead to good marriage or an enduring friendship. Failure to achieve intimacy can lead to alienation and isolation. As the subject moves to the seventh stage, he learns caring both in the sense of marriage and parenthood, and in the sense of working
productive and creatively. The last stage refers to the maturity and integrity of the subject, consequently the subject experiences wholeness. The product of the completion of such a stage would be wisdom.

Discussion

The primary objective of the study is to critically analyze the selected novel of D.H. Lawrence’s Sons in Lovers and Women in Love. The Objective of the study that is to apply Eriksonian psychoanalytic reading and study different characters. Characters in both novels, Sons and Lovers and Women in Love, have remarkable link with each other. The aim of this research is to clarify and describe causes of these relationships.

Erikson Believed that an author writes his or her novel according to his or her real life. Erikson asserts roots of everything in life depend on the events of childhood periods. Paul Morel in Sons and Lovers is regarded as self-portrait, and really Lawrence understood his own nature. To Erikson (1975), identity develops from a “Gradual integrational all identifications” but that “the whole has a different quality than the Sum of its Pauls” (95).

Sons and Lovers a novel by D.H. Lawrence has long lent itself well to Eriksonian criticism. The novel deals with relation of people through different stages. The novel tells us, Gertrude is a “a Women who waited for her children to grow up” (SL 68). Here, the process of motherhood signifies the fact that Mrs. Morel finds fulfillment in her relationship with her sons. It gives her pleasure and helps her overcome the pains that she might have had from her own experiences as a mother. Erikson’s notion of identity has in common with existentialist concept of identity which emphasizes being and existence which becomes meaningful through different stages and development. These stages resemble a journey that a man has to take and psychological crises make it adventurous. The tensions between different concepts including trust, independence, creativity and other concepts have filled the novel. The tension of intimacy and isolation is a significant one and it features the relationship between Paul and his mother since it makes a significant part of the novel. According to Erikson, identity develops from a “Gradual integrational all identifications” but that “the whole has a different quality than the Sum of its Pauls”.

It is known that Erikson believes in the role of cultural and social forces at shaping personality through these eight stages. Mrs. Morel desires to keep her son for herself and for this reason she gets at odds with Miriam. Mrs. Morel does not want that Paul be taken away by the beloved. There is a conflict between mother and the beloved for the soul of Paul. It is written “From his mother he drew the life-warmth, the strength to produce; Miriam urged this warmth into intensity like a white light. Lawrence has tried to show that there should be proper” (SL 184). Here, the author highlights how the relation between two opposing forces can be balanced by using type characters such as Mr. Morel and Mrs. Morel. Through these two characters, it can be shown how passion and intellect are contrasted and balanced. Paul gets in different contradictory relations; on one hand, there is Miriam is considered:

She hated her position as swine-girl. She wanted to be considered. She wanted to learn, thinking that if she could read, as Paul said he could read, “Colomba”, or the "Voyage autour de ma Chambre", the world would have a different face for her and a deepened respect. She could not be princess by wealth or standing. So she was mad to have learning whereon to pride herself. For she was different from other folk, and must not be scooped up among the common fry. Learning was the only distinction to which she thought to aspire. (167)

Here the author describes the how Miriam is interested in learning and acquiring intelligence. On the other hand, there is Clara who is more interested in physical relations. Lawrence writes “But Mrs. Dawes was separated from her husband, and had taken up Women's Rights. She was supposed to be clever. It interested Paul” (SL 216). Such an imbalance within Clara makes it difficult for Paul to make a stable relation with her. In fact, Paul has to face and bear the difficulties of such relationships in order to acquire a typical balance that he has been searching for it. He is unable to decide what is best for him and he is not very independent in making his decision. Such a tragic condition that Paul suffers from is rooted in those stages that Erikson has developed. Paul’s parents particularly her mother played a significant role at shaping his character. In fact, by the use of mother’s figure, Lawrence wanted to show the role of social and cultural forces that Erikson has considered significant. Erik Erikson’s theory of this social psychology points out to the importance of others’ life on the growth of the subjects. In other words, social life of others can model the development of personality and function as the role model in which life is adjusted.
Erikson recognized developmental crises that typically developing subjects experience as they grow emotionally and socially. Each developmental period brings skills to be learned. There are four stages of a child’s lifespan and the issues they may experience as they develop. The first stage highlights the role of basic needs that might be satisfied in this stage. According to Erikson the most important one is trust. Likewise, Paul’s trust depends on his own family and the way that he has brought up. This could be acquired through his parents’ training for Paul since they were the first people that he became familiar. According to Erikson’s views, Paul had to experience different types of conflict with his own father. Lawrence attempted to describe Paul’s father and he gave a negative view of him: “The father was serving beer in a public house, swilling himself drunk. She despised him, and was tied to him. This coming child was too much for her. If it were not for William and Annie, she was sick of it, the struggle with poverty and ugliness and meanness” (SL 7).

His father was a drunk and poor man who could not provide his own family. Therefore, it is ordinary that Paul faces different types of conflict due to his social and cultural training system. In fact, it might be realized that he was not able to cope with some of his conflicts and resolve them. Their conflicts might be traced to Paul’s relation with her own mother as he grew up attached to his own mother, so that Oedipal stage turned complicated. Paul’s abnormal relation with his own mother could affect his relations with other women as he is not able to decide and make a balance between them. In fact, Paul’s mother relation is mostly controlled by the role of his father since his mother’s feeling for Paul has grown out of his hatred for his father. Paul’s mother acts possessive and she wants to keep Paul at her own sight like the time when Paul was a child and his mother watched him. The mother acquires her love results in stunted emotional growth of Paul. Miriam is very passionate in her emotions.

She wants to show her own emotion for him, but he cannot understand her love since the concept of love was distorted for him and Paul is left with sense of doubt which is common for him throughout his life. In other words, the stage of Oedipus complex could not complete for him. Since his mother could not take Paul for other, he is not able to process another relationship. As a result, he has to leave her for the sake of his own mother. As a result, Paul gave more importance to his mother than his beloved Miriam. Miriam is ready to make any sacrifices for Paul but due to Paul’s crises, he is not able to realize it. Moreover, physically, she cannot satisfy him since his relation with Miriam is mostly the matter of spirituality but physically, Paul is satisfied with Clara which is embodiment of his mother.

She could not give him any physical satisfaction, so that Paul become close with Clara but their love affair could not continue any more as it was mostly the matter of physical love. However, with Miriam it was purely platonic. Paul's ambivalence regarding the concept of love signifies his crises at sixth and seventh stages. Since Paul was manipulated by her own mother when he was younger, he could not experience such relationships.

Romantic love involves the physical love that is mingled with a kind of spirituality. It is a passionate spiritual-emotional-sexual attachment between a man and a woman that reflects a high regard for the value of each other's person. To give a thorough definition of such love, romantic love is defined as:

A feeling expressed in a romantic context between two people; it has a dimension of sexual attraction, even lust, but it is not limited to that; it is an emotion that is typically reserved for only one person (though romantic love is not necessarily inconsistent with sexual promiscuity); it carries the expectation of lasting duration; it involves intense attraction to the beloved’s whole person and is not just about attraction to the body. (Gottschall and Nordlund, 2002, 436)

Therefore a romantic love involves passionate or intense attachment, experience of spiritual affinity, some deep mutuality of values and outlook, some sense of being soul mates; if there is not deep emotional involvement; if there is not a strong sexual attraction, ‘if there is not mutual admiration… it cannot be considered romantic love. (Branden, 1980 p. 3). Romantic love is known by many names as, ‘passionate love’, ‘erotic love,’ ‘Eros’ and being ‘in love’. It has been said that the “association of love…Eros…is a manifestation of an isolated consciousness whose union with nature comes only as a result of a loss of being” (Duffy, 1970, 4).

Mrs. Morel does not want that Paul be taken away by the beloved .There is a conflict between mother and the beloved for the soul of Paul. As it is known, the novel is a self-journey of the characters particularly Paul. In order to reach maturity, Paul is supposed to pass all of the stages and Lawrence has shown the conflicts that Paul faces. The greatest conflict of Paul's life is her own mother and in fact she is the cause of her crises in his life. Her dissatisfaction
by her married life affected Paul as well. Consequently, Paul's life has been affected by her mother's presence. His failure to maintain relationships with other women could be traced in his mother's image since he is attached to his mother like a lover. The inadequacies that Paul witnesses in both Clara and Miriam are those that he desired to avoid within his mother.

Erikson believes the experience of intimacy in a perfect form can lead and result into a healthy marriage. This feature of intimacy can be experienced in adulthood stage. Mrs. Morel does not love her husband for this reason she feels guilty. Although once his husband is injured, she feels sorry for him, she cannot have emotional relationship with him. It is at this time that she attempts to find comfort in her son: "So she talked to her son, almost as if she were thinking aloud to him, and he took it in as best he could, by sharing her trouble to lighten it. And in the end she shared almost everything with him without knowing" (SL 102). This statement refers to the fact that Paul learns about the process of intimacy. However, he learns this process through his own mother. According to Erikson theory the successful young adult can experience true intimacy. This intimacy should lead to good marriage or an enduring friendship. Failure to achieve intimacy can lead to alienation and isolation. This process does not complete since there must be others into this relationship. However, it cannot be done since this spot is taken by Paul's mother. Their intimacy is not normal and it continues throughout the novel.

Paul’s personality and growth are deeply influenced by her mother. “Paul’s deep wish to live alone with his mother and not to marry is also encouraging by Mrs. Morel possessiveness” (Burden, 2001, 67). His love toward his mother is mostly originated in his heart, and this kind of love is not just a son toward a mother, but also it has physical trace. Morel who forms the psychological barrier that Paul repeatedly comes up against in his relationship between the women in lovers. Paul seeks his mother’s love in return, however, in order to become an independent man, he decided to escape from his mother’s influence. In the process of self-development he develops a spiritual love with Miriam and a Sexual one with Clara, he fails repeatedly since his understanding of love, intimacy, and marriage are clouded by the image of his mother.

Erikson argues that sociologically documented prevalence of female depression shows more pessimistic prospects for women’s path to Psychic wholeness. In the novel, Birkin is successful to maintain his relationship with another woman which is the result of his passing the crises of identity at different stages. It is mostly related to his connection with his parents and how he could deal with them. Birkin's strategies to grow his personality are the results of social and cultural forces. In the social context in which he has been brought, gender is considered innate and natural; however, the relationship between the couples depicts that gender is mostly the matter of social and cultural constructions.

According to the traditional view, it is believed that gender is linked to biology so that there exists a binary with categories of male and female. In this sense, gender is natural, innate, and stable since birth means what that could not be changed. There are many cases that contradict this view. Lorber and Farrell note: “What stays constant is that women and men have to be distinguishable” (1991, 1). This distinction that must exist between men and women are at first the matter physical features and biological attributes; this means that men and women are physically different. However, later, this difference is not limited just to biological and physical aspects; such differences could be traced in behavioral patterns. In this novel Lawrence’s shows the familiarity between the two men that is serious and highlights Lawrence’s contemplation on ideas about male relationship.

Erikson had a deep interest in humanity and society’s well-being in general. This crisis stage highlights the issue very meaningfully. Integrity means feeling at peace with the subject and the surrounding world. People might have a positive attitude towards the world in case they are able to deal with different crises during their growth. Therefore, the matters of sexuality and gender are what Erikson considers them as the sources of crises.

Interpretation of the relationship between Gerald Critch and Rupert Birkin in Women in Love has been by cloudiness and fuzziness. Clarke explains in his book, a homosexuality theme is consistently present in Lawrence’s fiction from the time of the white peacock on Lawrence. Erikson’s model was teleological and epigenetic in nature, and the stage of life known as identity vs. identity diffusion, he believed, should take place in mid- to late adolescence. According to stage Five Psychosocial crisis the concept of identity from Eriksonian point of view, elaborated in the Women in Love. The notion of identity preoccupied Erikson’s mind more than any other issues in Psychology infact, Erikson believed that “ adolescence is a particularly crucial period because in this time the question of ones basic ego identity is met and must be resolved” (Schultz, 2016 p. 295). Base on Schultzes view “[it]” is a time of interpretation and consolidation, in which everything we feel and know about ourselves is fused into a whole” (295).
This kind of gender categorization would result into some fixed and stereotypes about both male and female which can be seen within the novel. Women are supposed to be nurturing, gentle, submissive, and good at doing tasks at home. On the contrary, men tend to be strong and manipulative who want to take control of everything throughout society and family.

According to Butler, gender is not universal or innate at the time of birth; it is, rather, the process of becoming. Her theory is to locate the function in which sex is changed into gender (1990, 48). Gender is defined as a type of identity which is constructed as time passes. This construction takes place through following different systematic acts that eventually lead to creating gender in society. This shows that gender must be considered as a material entity since “illusion of an abiding gendered self” is the consequence of society (Ibid 179).

Since the construction of gender can only exist in a certain time and place, the domain of culture defines gendered behavior. Gender affects identity and is changed into an action of the self but does not come out of the real self. It never gets mixed with the physical body but is located on the surface of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. (Ibid 29)

The body can become a gendered entity through communicating with society. In this condition, gender resides outside or on the body, but it never gets mixed with the sexed form of the body. This period begins with biological changes, during which individuals must accomplish certain developmental tasks. Adolescents should answer to these questions reasonably that: who they are, and what way they like to follow in their future life. So, they should reach to the clear opinion about themselves and accept the responsibility of their manners which is not easy. On the other hand, identity confusion is a negative term meaning that the individuals, cannot see clearly or at all who they are and how they can relate positively with the environment. Since identity confusion jeopardize on coming developmental stages, Erikson focused on resolving this conflict as the axiom in order to live meaningfully. The identity crisis is the typical crisis of adolescence, and generativity is a crisis of mature adulthood. Bisexuality is romantic attraction, sexual attraction, or sexual behavior toward both males and females, or romantic or sexual attraction to people of any sex or gender identity; this latter aspect is sometimes alternatively termed pansexuality. According to Erikson (1959/1980), identity develops from a “gradual integration of all identifications” but that “the whole has a different quality than the sum of its parts” (95).

The relationship of Gerald and Birkin, as they establish themselves in the lives of their respective Women. Birkin points to two kinds of love, this is not usual for normal person. He is Satisfied of two kinds of love not only with a women but also with man and according to him relationship with a man to make it complete. They are signs of a bisexual person. “Man to Man” constantly appears the nature of Gerald and Rupert’s relationship. Many aspects of the homosocial relationship between Rupert and Gerald remain to be explored, such as the resulting misogyny towards women and the fate of each couples erotic triangle. However, the argument of male homosocial desire stands as the basis for their relationship. Because of the women’s role in the society, Rupert and Geralds union comes to a tragic end commitment unfulfilled. It is said that:

On the whole, he hated sex, it was such a limitation. It was sex that turned a man into a broken half of a couple, the woman into the other broken half. And he wanted to be single in himself, the woman single in herself. He wanted sex to revert to the level of the other appetites, to be regarded as a functional process, not as a fulfilment. He believed in sex marriage. But beyond this, he wanted a further conjunction, where man had being and woman had being, two pure beings, each constituting the freedom of the other, balancing each other like two poles of one force, like two angels, or two demons. (WL 367)

With this conviction Birkin decides to marry Ursula. But although their relationship is tender and peaceful, Birkin will never be completely gratified. He still regrets the fact that Gerald did not accept his love for him. Birkin believes that if Gerald had done this, Gerald would not have died. Their bond would have kept him alive, while Gerald’s physical relationship with Gudrun only drove him into destruction. He also believes that the spiritual connection he has with Ursula and which he offered to Gerald, is an eternal union which maintains after death. But now, according to Birkin, Gerald is lost, because Gerald did not accept his love, even in death. (WL 541) The final conversation between
Ursula and Rupert by which Women in Love concludes, conveys a clear expression of Rupert’s intention behind his ponderous contemplations during the novel. After Gerald has died, Ursula asks Rupert if he really needed Gerald and if she is not enough for him. Birkin answers: “You are all women to me. But I wanted a man friend, as eternal as you and I are eternal.” (WL 542) He calls it “another kind of love” on which Ursula reacts that “it's an obstinacy, a theory, a perversity”, it is impossible and a falsity. (ibid. 542)

Conclusion

The modern world has separated man from his natural self. He has lost one part of identity and therefore is lost. The awareness of physical nature and regaining the natural self can lead man gradually toward redemption and self-discovery. Taking this in consideration, Women in Love pictures a dejected image of world. In the eyes of Birkin, all the character are “degraded human beings” and the only thing that distinguishes him of the others is his consciousness (WL 202) still, the novel ends with hope. The aspiration for happiness drove Paul for action. Mrs. Morels striving for love from her son led to the destruction of her own son’s happiness along with that of other characters closely associated with Paul. Her imposing character contributed to the nothingness in Paul’s life and his stale relations with other women.

References


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