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SONS AND LOVERS AS *BILDUNGSROMAN*

Richard D. Beards

There are two traditional approaches to *Sons and Lovers*, one of which treats the novel as a psychological study, emphasizing particularly Paul's Oedipal complex; the second of which focuses on the autobiographical, exploring the many passages where Lawrence seems to be retelling his own experience fictionally (the scenes of family life, the mining background, Paul and Miriam's relationship.)<sup>1</sup> While the first approach risks reducing the novel to a case history, the second has the danger of undermining *Sons and Lovers*' effectiveness as fictional vision, turning it instead into a confessional autobiography, and vitiating Lawrence's achievement with plot, symbol, dramatic scene, and invented character. Moreover, these two approaches often join forces, so that autobiography is used to support the claims of psychological analysis, psychological generalizations cited to strengthen the autobiographical critique—especially where there are gaps in what we know of Lawrence's life. An example of the latter treatment is the attempt to clarify the at best hazy identity of the original for Clara Dawes (Louie Burrows? an unidentified Nottingham mistress? Frieda, later Lawrence's wife?) by referring to what psychology calls "the reaction formation," in particular Lawrence's attempt to escape his mother's domination by drawing close to an opposite. Both of these approaches, the autobiographical and the psychological, lead to interesting questions and cruxes in the novel, offering the student opportunity to consider two kinds of critical literature. On the one hand he gets to study a literary rendering—and a superb one—of the Oedipus complex; on the other, he can absorb the facts of Lawrence's life as they are recorded in his letters, in autobiographical sketches and in memoirs about his "Sons and Lovers" period.<sup>2</sup>

It is my contention in this essay that seeing *Sons and Lovers* against the pattern of the traditional *Bildungsroman* illuminates many of the literary aspects of the novel about which neither the psychological nor the autobiographical approach cares and that this view does justice to one of Lawrence's best artistic achievements. In addition, because the *Bildungsroman* emerges in the nineteenth century and continues into our own, its focus on the conflict between an alienated individual and the cultural forces (family, neighborhood, class, religious and ethical milieu) against which this individual seeks to establish himself relates directly to the lives of our students. Moreover, the kind of conflict I have outlined comprises the real plot of *Sons and Lovers*, expressed jointly in Paul's struggle to free his soul from his mother and to become an artist where economic necessity all but rules out such a possibility. Paul's movement toward self-real-

zation is expressed symbolically in his rejection of adjustment to the everyday (an adjustment made by his brother Arthur and sister, Annie) in favor of the starry night in which he finds hope at the novel's end; in his attraction to cities (first Nottingham, then London, and ultimately perhaps even Paris) instead of "The Bottom" or, later, the houses on Scargill Street; and in his refusal to make life for himself in terms of provincial possibilities. But before an examination of the specific details of *Sons and Lovers*, it would be wise to review some of the general characteristics of the *Bildungsroman*.

The *Bildungsroman* ("novel of self-development" or "apprenticeship novel" are the best English equivalents) features a protagonist,<sup>3</sup> an apprentice to life, whose goal is to master it so that he can achieve an ideal or ambition, fulfillment of which will heighten his sense of self. A look at related types of fiction may serve to clarify the *Bildungsroman* itself. Close to the confession and the autobiography, the *Bildungsroman* is often a first or second novel which fictionalizes its author's growing up. It is also similar to the picaresque novel, though in the *Bildungsroman* the journey through life has been internalized; adventures are important principally for their effect on the protagonist's psychological development and sense of self. The *Bildungsroman* protagonist is usually more passive, reflective, intellectual and artistic than his picaresque counterpart, probably because the author, himself introverted and creative, has fashioned his character out of himself. Still another type of related fiction is the initiation story or novel, though here the focus is a single moment of vision where the protagonist accepts either the code of his elders or the hard facts of life itself, or both (e.g. Faulkner's "The Bear," James' "The Lesson of the Master," Crane's "The Red Badge of Courage"). Compared to the initiation novel, the *Bildungsroman* compounds the choices which the central character is called upon to make, forcing him to define separately but in a continuous process his values in regard to four crucial concerns: vocation, mating, religion, and identity.

All of these decisions must be made without the aid of formal education, for whenever schooling is depicted in novels of self-development it is shown to be sterile and hopelessly anachronistic, if not downright farcical (e.g. *Pendennis*, *Great Expectations*, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*). One sometimes suspects that the impetus for a fictional sub-genre which shows protagonists designing and shaping their own lives is the need to respond to a culture where the educative institutions (schools, churches, family and class traditions) are in chaos. While the college teacher understandably will feel a bit defensive pointing out the *Bildungsroman*'s typical assessment of formal education—*Sons and Lovers* doesn't even bother to mention Paul's schooling—it should be noted that this decision results

from wider forces than mere pedagogical incompetence. It is no accident that the *Bildungsroman* emerges strongest in the nineteenth century, for it is during this epoch that the traditional class society and its heavily class-weighted institutions and values, in effect since the Renaissance, undergo pressure and serious erosion. It is in this century too that for the first time a young man who was not born a gentleman could choose to ignore the social status and even the particular work of his father without necessarily facing near-suicidal odds (see, for example, Robinson Crusoe's regrets and guilt over ignoring his father's advice). While large numbers of the more intelligent and energetic members of the lower and middle classes sought to rise above their inherited stations in life, the educational system continued to reflect an outmoded society where class determined the content and quality of one's education. Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* illustrates perfectly the disparity between its stonemason hero's ambitions and the educational opportunities available to one of his class. In *Sons and Lovers* Paul Morel's education is casual rather than institutional; he is tutored in French and German by the local minister, Mr. Heaton; coached in composition by his brother William; encouraged in his art by his mother; and self-taught when it comes to literature, Miriam serving in both of the last two instances to inspire Paul to his best.

The same independence which characterizes Paul's education helps to prevent his capitulation to the economic and social outlook of his elders and peers, though his mother's distaste for her husband and the way of life he stands for certainly stiffens her son's resistance. Like many of his nineteenth-century predecessors, Paul shows considerable pluck, resilience and idealism in pushing his way toward an artist's future, though the usual stress laid by critics on his Oedipal conflict undermines our sense of Paul's consistency and force of character. Persistent belief in his future as an artist accounts for Paul's refusal to accept provincial goals and expectations. Surprisingly, economics plays a much larger role in *Sons and Lovers* than is often recognized, partly because it bears little if any relationship to Paul's psychological emergence, nor much more to Lawrence's own personal experience (though his letters reveal considerable concern over his finances, Lawrence never allowed making a living to interfere with his writing).

Simply expressed, the economic question in *Sons and Lovers* sets earning against creating. Four times in the novel the reader gets detailed accounts of the coal miner's finances: how pay is divided in the family, pp. 17-18, pp. 69-72 (collecting wages at the company office), p. 87 (compensation when Morel is injured) and pp. 198-201 (dividing the pay among four butties).<sup>4</sup> Obviously, Lawrence is recalling these details from his own experience and such scenes help to establish the realistic depiction of turn-of-the-century

life among Midlands miners for which *Sons and Lovers* is justly famous. But beyond this relationship to realism, these scenes fit the money or wage motif of the novel on the whole, a motif which sounds a relentless and unavoidable bass note against which Paul's lyric fantasies of artistic fruition must compete. Each time Paul receives a raise at Jordan's or moves up in the hierarchy there, we are told about it. Likewise, William's mercurial rise to something like gentleman's status in London law office circles stands both as exemplum and warning to Paul; William's record is more than merely that of an older sibling, for he was Mrs. Morel's first son—and "lover"—though he has escaped only to die prematurely. Later in the novel, when Paul seems to believe he can have art and money too, imagining himself a popular and therefore well-to-do artist, the alliance between art and income seems a romantically founded and improbable one. In a scene which follows a passage where Mrs. Morel angrily denounces her husband for leaving her too little money for the week ("a measly twenty-five shillings!"), Paul shows Miriam his designs for "decorating stuff, and for embroidery" (p. 201). "With a touch of bitterness" he explains, "I did it for my mother, but I think she'd rather have the money" (p. 202). Later, in the first paragraph of Chapter XII, "Passion," we are informed that Paul is beginning to earn a living through his textile and ceramic designs, while "at the same time, he laboured slowly at his pictures" (p. 301). Furthermore, Paul's integrity as an artist (he has to accept less money for a commissioned painting because he will not paint what is demanded of him) and the peculiar subject of his painting, luminous figures "fitted into a landscape," don't promise the kind of success Paul imagines for himself. Regardless, however, of his probable future, Paul here faces a problem which confronts all protagonists in self-development novels—how to make a living.<sup>5</sup> If we fail to consider the vocational and economic issue in Paul Morel's development, we thin out and over-simplify his struggle toward self-realization. Knowledge of the typical *Bildungsroman* protagonist alerts us to this aspect of Lawrence's novel.

A second characteristic of all *Bildungsromane* is that their protagonists must always decide on a suitable mate or at least define the ideal who waits in the near-distant future; the central figures in self-development novels are thus, among other things, apprentice lovers. This aspect of *Sons and Lovers* has received close attention from critics of all persuasions; if the plot of mother-son love itself is not enough, Lawrence's treatment of Gertrude, Miriam, and Clara, and their respective relationships to Paul have aroused heated debate, charge and counter-charge. The way in which the novel appears to blame Gertrude for dominating and almost destroying Paul and to indict Miriam for her near-frigidity and squeamishness has given rise to a great deal of angry discussion almost from the

day the novel appeared.<sup>6</sup> In our own time by far the most provocative attack on this aspect of *Sons and Lovers* has been Kate Millett's in *Sexual Politics*.<sup>7</sup> Writing from a Marxist-feminist perspective, Millett accuses Paul (and by implication, Lawrence) of using the three women in his life, then discarding them when they no longer serve his self-centered interests. Millett describes Paul as the "perfection of self-sustaining ego" and states, "the women in the book exist in Paul's orbit and cater to his needs: Clara to awaken him sexually, Miriam to worship his talent in the role of disciple and Mrs. Morel to provide always that enormous and expansive support. . ." (p. 247). Despite the bluntness and even crudeness of her critique, and the fact that in regard to Gertrude, Millett seems to contradict herself (elsewhere in her discussion she calls the novel "a great tribute to his mother and a moving record of the strongest and most formative love of the author's life," p. 246)—one must admit some truth to the charge.

Students today are especially sensitive to the treatment of female characters in fiction, particularly where, as in *Sons and Lovers*, there is sufficient development to assess a life pattern or an unachieved potential in these lives. Undeniably, Gertrude's life is laid before us; we know enough of her history to see the sources of her aspirations, first for herself, then for herself and her husband, finally for her successive sons. Her sense of entrapment in a dead-end marriage to Morel, her envy of Mrs. Leiver's life, her vicarious participation in life through her children—these and other details allow us to know her predicament. And when, in her final illness, Paul administers a fatal dose of morphine, her victimization—by unavoidable pregnancies which bind her tighter to her despised mate and which sap her strength and by a culture which discourages women from working in the world—is made final by her son. Likewise, Clara and Miriam, opposite as they are in character, seem purposeless and incomplete unless they can join in a vitalizing relationship with a male. Clara—listless, cynical and cold (several scenes show her kneeling before a fire, presumably trying to imbibe its warmth)—drifts until she consummates her relationship to Paul, who, when he realizes their relationship is merely physical, brings Clara and her estranged husband Baxter back together again.<sup>8</sup> Miriam's faith that Paul will ultimately return to her, that his spiritual and idealistic side will triumph over his need for sex, seems pathetic finally, in view of her sacrificial sexual surrender to him, her compulsive chapel going when Paul is involved with Clara, and his final dismissal of her: "'Will you have me, to marry me?' he said very low. . . 'Do you want it?' she asked very gravely. 'Not much,' he replied, with pain" (pp. 417-418).<sup>9</sup>

The tradition of the *Bildungsroman* itself provides an explanation for this apparent male bias, for fiction with a developmental focus always slights characters not of the protagonist's sex, and for that matter, *all* the other characters. One of the distinguishing traits of the apprenticeship novel is the strong central figure for whose experience and development the lesser figures exist, and from whose process of self-realization the novel receives one of its principal unifying elements. Furthermore, the novel of self-development generally is written from a narrowly omniscient point of view, the author standing beside his character, as it were, and most often interpreting experience through his character's mind, senses and emotions. Thus the *Bildungsroman's* customary point of view adds to a sense of the protagonist's egoism and lends emphasis to his seeming exploitation of the novel's other figures.

Because mating plays such a significant part in maturation—and thus in apprenticeship fiction—protagonists, whether male or female, will inevitably use and exploit at least several members of the opposite sex. Thackerary's Pendennis, for example, eponymous hero of the novel sometimes called the first *Bildungsroman* in English (1849-1850),<sup>10</sup> is involved several times (with Fotheringay, an Irish actress; with Fanny Bolton, a "poor but honest" girl from the lower classes; and with Blanche Amory, a continental adventuress in the manner of George Sand and her heroines) before succumbing in marriage to his mother's ward, companion and protege, Laura, whom he has all but ignored through most of the novel. Similarly, in Lawrence's *The Rainbow*, Ursula Brangwen, a typical *Bildungsroman* heroine, rejects two men who want to marry her, Anthony Schofield and Anton Skrebensky, because, as she thinks to herself after rejecting Anthony, "ultimately and finally, she must go on and on, seeking the goal that she knew she did draw nearer to" (p. 376). Thus Millett's account of Paul's position at the conclusion of *Sons and Lovers* ("Having rid himself of the two young women, . . . Paul is free to make moan over his mother's corpse, give Miriam a final brushoff, and turn his face to the city<sup>12</sup>) is hardly very convincing when one has in mind fictional tradition, in particular, the *Bildungsroman's* tendency to adopt the protagonist's point of view, to maximize for the reader the central figure's sense of self-concern, to give other characters instrumental rather than independent functions.

Ursula Brangwen's goal in *The Rainbow*, "to be oneself . . . a oneness with the infinite," realized in botany lab as she peers down a microscope after her professor had denied any mystical dimension in life, brings us to both of the remaining concerns of the *Bildungsroman* protagonist: his quest for identity and for the right relationship to the transcendent and

non-human in the universe. Admittedly, some apprenticeship novels (*Pendennis*, *Pere Goriot*), in their intensive treatment of social reality, largely ignore supernatural and intangible realities. Yet from Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* (1833-1834) on, the religious crisis and the more general search for the transcendent meanings of life have typified novels of self-development. For Paul Morel as for Ursula, religious sense and identity are deeply intertwined; this interrelationship has become, of course, a hallmark of Lawrence's mature fictions, where a knowledge of oneness is brought about by an interfusion of the individual and the natural world via sex or a "lapsing out" of consciousness. It is quite easy to misread symbolic scenes in *Sons and Lovers*—and I think Millett and others are guilty of this—through failing to take into account Lawrence's idea of one's relationship to the infinite. It is possible for instance to interpret Paul's vision of Clara bathing—he sees her as "not much more than a clot of foam being blown and rolled over the sand . . . just a concentrated speck blown along, a tiny white foam-bubble, almost nothing among the morning" (pp. 357-358)—as his belittling of her, preparatory to his terminating their relationship. In fact, Millett evaluates the scene as follows: "Paul converts himself into a species of god in the universe before whom Clara dwindles to the proportions of microscopic life" (pp. 255-256). Other critics have judged Paul lost and despondent in the final paragraphs of the novel because he feels like "so tiny a spark" being pressed into extinction. Both assessments are wrong, for they ignore the implicit paradox in Lawrence's definition of self, where real being requires this feeling of tininess, of being infinitesimal. Millett, in her eagerness to indict Paul's self-centeredness, ignores this essential of the world-view Lawrence establishes in *Sons and Lovers*. An opposite view to Millett's, one which venerates Lawrence's mystical vision where Millett only scorns it, has been recently expressed by Joyce Carol Oates.<sup>13</sup> Acknowledging the irritating challenge of Lawrence's love ethic, Oates declares Lawrence to be, not as Millett would have it, a sexual reactionary, but "too radical for us even today" (p. 11). Lawrence, Oates continues, "goes back beyond even the tradition women are rebelling against, today, to a mystical union based upon the primitive instincts of our species, but carrying us forward into pure spirit" (p. 12). He may well be abrasive, "yet one comes to believe that Lawrence is absolutely right" (p. 12).

Still another recent critic, Calvin Bedient, has effectively argued that for Lawrence the fusion of soul which the author himself felt with his mother transcended the Oedipal, giving Lawrence—and therefore his fictional projection Paul—the sense of a mystical oneness next to which other relationships to women seem ordinary, flat, and merely personal.<sup>14</sup> Only at the peak of physical or sexual exhilaration does Paul experience

the infinite; such moments occur when he is swinging in the Leiver's barn, riding his bicycle recklessly home after a strained evening at the farm, making love with Clara on a steep clay river bank or with Miriam in a pine grove. As Paul expresses it after the latter experience, "the highest of all was to melt out into the darkness and sway there, identified with the great Being" (p. 287). Bedient is convincing when he suggests that although Lawrence wasn't aware of it in *Sons and Lovers*, the work conveys rather fully its author's vision of the highest state of being and how that state can be obtained.

In counterbalance to those scenes where Paul lapses out of consciousness, often outdoors and frequently at night, *Sons and Lovers* furnishes occasional comments on its protagonist's changing relationship to traditional religious life and practice; Paul's fall from orthodoxy coincides with the growth of his mystic awareness and his ability to summon it, while, on the literal level, it evidences his growth away from the Morel family's habitual and easy chapel going. At twenty-one, we are told, "he was beginning to question the orthodox creed (p. 192);" the following spring "he was setting now full sail towards Agnosticism, but such a religious Agnosticism that Miriam did not suffer badly" (p. 227). The term "religious Agnosticism" indicates, I think, the growth in Paul of the mystical sense I have been describing, "agnostic" both because Lawrence speaks of God only metaphorically and because Paul's "religion" has nothing to do with any institutional faith.

Later in the novel Paul clarifies the nature of his religious belief in an argument with Miriam: "It's not religious to be religious. . . . I reckon a crow is religious when it sails across the sky. But it only does it because it feels itself carried to where it's going, not because it thinks it's being eternal" (p. 251). The crow's lack of consciousness, its utter passivity—"it feels itself carried to where it's going"—corresponds to Paul's (and Lawrence's) sense of the religious as opposed to Miriam's.

What *Sons and Lovers* depicts in the way of identity for the protagonist, then, is two-fold; there is the Paul who is second son to the Morel family, a Bestwood provincial aiming for the artist's life, the one whose personal history and day-by-day development the novel charts, and there is the Paul who is increasingly opened up to manifestations of a living natural universe, a speck of which he is and in whose dark precincts his mother exists "intermingled" (p. 420). It is this mystical level of identity that Lawrence illuminates so effectively, for the first time in *Sons and Lovers*; it is indeed hard to think of another novelist who conveys this dimension so convincingly. Thus Lawrence is able to contribute to the *Bildungsroman* and to English fiction generally a deeper interpenetration

of the human and the vital natural world than had been previously envisioned—or than has been created fictionally since.

Paul's two-level identity is further clarified by his symbolic association with several biblical and mythological figures. When he is an infant, his mother imagines him a Joseph, though later in the same scene she suddenly declares "I will call him Paul" (p. 37). When he is courting Miriam, Paul himself assumes a special relationship to the constellation Orion: "Orion was for them [Paul and Miriam] chief in significance among the constellations" (p. 195). These connections to astrological and biblical mythology in themselves suggest both the everyday and the vitalistic identities of Paul, the individual myths containing, moreover, details pertinent to all the typical self-developing protagonists in general and to Paul Morel in particular. Paul's similarity to his apostle namesake comes out most clearly in his relationship to Miriam; to her he is a stern moralist and rule-giver, whose irritability presages radical growth, though the principles of Paul's ultimate ethic come close to inverting his biblical predecessor's.<sup>15</sup>

Paul's connections to Joseph are perhaps more obvious; like Joseph, he is a younger and favored son who leaves his father and homeland, and, after a period of bondage, is proclaimed a genius among a foreign people. (The biblical story of Joseph, is, in fact, a prototype of the novel of self-development.) When Walter Morel is injured in the pits, Paul is forced to give up his painting and his fantasies of where his art might take him—"His ambition . . . when his father died [was to] have a cottage with his mother, paint and go out as he liked. . . . And he thought that *perhaps* he might also make a painter, the real thing" (p. 89). The scene in which the news of his father's injury reaches home (pp. 83-86) captures beautifully Paul's intense devotion to his art in the midst of family catastrophe; while Mrs. Morel bustles about preparing to see to her despised yet needing mate, Paul continues with his painting. "Bondage" for Paul is explicitly related to the laboring world; forced by his father's mishap to seek a job, he reflects: "Already he was a prisoner of industrialism . . . He was being taken into bondage. His freedom in the beloved home valley was going now" (p. 89). Later, on his way to be interviewed at Jordan's surgical appliance factory, Paul passes through the company yard, which Lawrence describes as being "like a pit," recalling the pit in which Joseph is abandoned by his brothers. Whereas Joseph ultimately triumphs as the Pharaoh's dream interpreter, Paul's victory is to be an artistic one.

Orion, third of the mythic figures with whom Paul is associated, symbolizes perfectly the progressive, self-achieving element in the *Bildungs-*

roman hero. Sword raised, feet in bold stride, Orion represents the battle-ready hunter in the process of his quest. It is important to recognize the disparity between the reserved, even diffident Paul and his mythological inspiration in the northern night sky; Orion, like Paul's mother, is, as the novel concludes, a source of inspiration, permanently fixed and shining, not a symbol of the already-achieved. Whatever wounds the death of his mother aggravates in Paul, he imagines her star-like and ever-present, like Orion, the hunter, an encouragement to go on.

The concluding pages of *Sons and Lovers* present several difficult but ultimately answerable questions as to Paul's probable future which the apprenticeship novel can help clarify. In an interesting article entitled "Autobiograph in the English *Bildungsroman*,"<sup>16</sup> Jerome Buckley argues that because the novel of self-development is highly subjective, commonly fictionalizing the author's own experience, "the novel has frequently an inconclusive or contrived ending," its creator being too close to the experience being retold "to achieve an adequate perspective on (it)." "*Sons and Lovers*," he adds, "scarcely persuades us that Paul Morel at last finds the release from his fixation that Lawrence apparently won, perhaps in the very act of writing the novel" (p. 97). Commenting on the final paragraph of *Sons and Lovers*, Buckley asserts that "nothing has prepared us for so positive a resolution. If Paul is at last free and whole, his victory is not inherent in his story; it is imposed upon it from without" (p. 103). Even with the added weight of Lawrence's own judgment on the ending ("Paul is left in the end naked of everything, with the drift toward death")<sup>17</sup> I would maintain that Paul's triumph is "inherent in his story" and that a knowledge of the *Bildungsroman*, precisely in those characteristics I have been discussing, helps us to see the rightness of the final affirmation.<sup>18</sup>

Paul's trajectory all through *Sons and Lovers*, like that of many other *Bildungsroman* protagonist (Ursula Brangwen, Wilhelm Meister, and Augie March among them) has been away from pressure to conform—whether social, familial or economic—and toward the accomplishment of his own ideal. Paul's brothers, first William, then Arthur, are foils to his aspiration; William prostitutes his attractive personality for social and business success; Arthur, initially rebellious and impulsive, capitulates to provincial expectations: "He buckled to work, undertook his responsibilities, acknowledged that he belonged to his wife and child" (p. 258). William's life, presented in far more detail than Arthur's, forms a compressed *Bildungsroman* in itself, wherein his mercurial rise to social and financial success, his quick movement from the provinces to London, and his absurd romance with Gypsy Western come close to forming a grim

parody of apprenticeship fiction. William's rapid and thoughtless climb contrasts dramatically with Paul's slow, painful, self-conscious struggle toward freedom and self-realization. The dramatic contrast between the two brothers serves to support the promising view of Paul's future suggested by the final paragraph of *Sons and Lovers*; Paul's values are nothing like his older brother's, and Paul consciously rejects a business career and the social approval and circumstances William is so desperate to gain. Lawrence reflects this difference symbolically when Paul goes to Nottingham to receive first prize for his painting. Dressed in William's altered evening suit, Paul "did not look particularly a gentleman" (255). Moreover, Paul argues vigorously against his mother's advice that he ought "in the end to marry a lady" (256). Having refused to follow William's ambitions, condemned by Lawrence's tone and treatment as well as by the obvious pattern of self-destruction and folly implicit in the older brother's choices, Paul is freed from William's fate.

Further proof that Paul's victory is not as Buckley maintains, "imposed . . . from without," is the evolution in Paul's mystical sense of self, which I've touched on earlier. From those early occasions when we see Paul in a state of natural exhilaration to later scenes when he expresses his positive sense of lapsing out of consciousness after making love to Miriam ("the highest of all was to melt into the darkness and stay there, identified with the great being" (p. 287), the alert reader is readied for the final vision when Paul sees his mother as "intermingled" with the night: "she had been one place, and was in another; that was all" (p. 420). Even if we discard this momentary hope as rationalization, there is additional evidence—besides the final paragraph's "but no, he would not give in"—to substantiate Paul's vision and final confidence. It is misreading Lawrence to see mere tininess as indicative of weakness and failure; Paul and his mother may, like the stars, be mere grains or sparks, yet they do not disappear. By relating his mother to the stars, Paul is admitting their special separation but not their mystical one; like Orion to Paul and Miriam in an earlier scene, Mrs. Morel is a fixed source of inspiration, the sign to her son of his own divine connection. And certainly, though much has been made of Mrs. Morel's destructive hold on her son, it is important to recognize her role in encouraging and fostering her son's talents as a painter. Few artists in fiction (and probably in life) have had more effective and more positive nurturing than Paul gets from Mrs. Morel (compare, for example, Stephen Daedalus' situation), and therefore it seems reasonable to see this maternal encouragement as ultimately sustaining rather than ruinous.

Paul's movement in the final sentences of the novel toward the "city's gold phosphorescence . . . the faintly humming, glowing town" (p. 420)

fits perfectly the province-to-city pattern of most *Bildungsromane*. All through the nineteenth century and into our own time, the city has been the place where the ambitious have sought their challenge, have striven to define themselves.<sup>19</sup> Jude, Pip, Augie March, Eugene Gant, Julien Sorel, Martha Quest. Ernest Pontifex—all seek out the city in search of their imagined and idealized selves. The glow that Lawrence here ascribes to Nottingham symbolizes its hopefulness, for throughout the novel gold and flames have stood for the vital impulse of life. In the opening pages of *Sons and Lovers*, to cite an early example, we learn of Paul's mother's attraction to Arthur Morel, epitomized by "the dusky, golden softness of this man's sensuous flame of life, that flowed off his flesh like the flame of a candle . . ." (p. 10).

It is undeniably true that Paul's life is still in process when *Sons and Lovers* concludes, yet all the signs of ultimate success and of a promising independence are there; Lawrence's next novel, also a novel of self-development, ends with its heroine Ursula, having lived through a traumatic love affair, a pregnancy and a miscarriage, understanding the rainbow to promise, like the sign of the covenant, new life in a recreated world. Like her, Paul Morel, whose trauma is his mother's death, perceives a vision of unity between the night and the stars, his mother's spirit and his own, which sends him back into the fight—fist clenched—after his temporary depression and withdrawal. Even Kate Millett, openly hostile to Lawrence's art, recognizes Paul's movement toward the world of men, evidenced by her description of him as wishing "to be rid of the whole pack of his female supporters so that he may venture forth and inherit the masculine world that awaits him" (p. 252); Paul is, she asserts, "in brilliant shape when the novel ends" (p. 257).

More importantly, when we consider, as I have tried to do here, the four distinct trials which the *Bildungsroman* protagonist must traditionally master—vocation, mating, religion and identity—Paul's future, though Lawrence's tone is typically equivocal,<sup>20</sup> seems assured. He knows what he wants to do in life; has realized the dimensions of sexual relationship, even if he hasn't found his ideal mate; has forged a new religious sense; and knows, largely because he's defined these other questions, who he is, and, equally important, what "selves" he has left behind.

#### ENDNOTES

- 1 See Julian Moynahan, *The Deed of Life, The Novels and Tales of D. H. Lawrence*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963). Moynahan argues for three levels of meaning in *Sons and Lovers*, "autobiographical narrative," "psychoanalytic 'matrix,'" and "the matrix of 'life'"—corresponding to my mystical process of identity, discussed later in the essay.

- 2 See Jessie Chambers, ("E. T."), *D. H. Lawrence, A Personal Record* (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1935) for "Miriam's" side of the story. Other works by Lawrence dealing with his life in the Midlands include his long essay "Nottingham and the Mining Country," and his play *A Collier's Friday Night*. Gamini Salgado, *A Casebook on Sons and Lovers* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1969) has a fine selection of these ancillary materials.
- 3 Protagonists in novels of self-development are sometimes female, e.g., Ursula Brangwen in Lawrence's *The Rainbow*, Maggie Tulliver in *Mill on the Floss*, Martha Quest in Doris Lessing's *Children of Violence* series.
- 4 All references to *Sons and Lovers* are to the Viking Press paperback edition, probably the most widely available.
- 5 A good many central figures in self-development novels of the Victorian period inherit money, shifting the problem from the necessity of earning to the importance of learning how to spend money in a morally justifiable way. This pattern fits such novels as *Pendennis*, *Great Expectations*, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* and *The Way of All Flesh*.
- 6 Salgado's *Casebook*, referred to above, includes in a section called "Early Comment and Original Reviews" most of the relevant material. See also Ronald Diaper, *D. H. Lawrence, The Critical Heritage* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1970).
- 7 New York: Avon, 1969.
- 8 On the psychoanalytic implications of Paul's relationship to Baxter Dawes see Daniel A. Weiss, *Oedipus in Nottingham* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962), pp. 29-37.
- 9 The final phrase, "with pain," refers obviously to Paul's attempt to blunt the pain of his mother's recent death by dependency on a woman. His refusal of both Miriam and Clara supports his resurgence of will and purpose at the end of *Sons and Lovers*.
- 10 My own candidate for the honors is Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, published serially 1833-1834.
- 11 In a recent essay—"Women and Nature in Modern Fiction," *Contemporary Literature*, XIII (Fall, 1972, 476-490)—Annis Pratt makes an extensive comparison of male and female *Bildungsromane* and their developmental pattern. Her comments on Paul Morel and Martha Quest, heroine of Doris Lessing's *Children of Violence* sequence, are relevant here: "More appreciative than Paul Morel of her lovers, Martha is nonetheless involved in a certain instrumentalism, a using of them, which is, however, reciprocated" (p. 488); and "on her pilgrimage from man to man (Martha) tends to use men in much the same way the hero uses women . . ." (p. 490).
- 12 Millett, *op. cit.*, 257.
- 13 "Candid Revelations: The Complete Poems of D. H. Lawrence," *The American Poetry Review*, I (November/December, 1972), 11-13.
- 14 *Architects of the Self* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 117-125.
- 15 Judith Farr, in her introductory essay to *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Sons and Lovers* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970), argues interestingly that Mrs. Morel chooses the name Paul "to separate her son from his father; indeed, to relate him to her own father, a 'harsh,' 'ironic' man 'who ignored all sensuous pleasure' and 'drew near in sympathy to only one man, the Apostle Paul.' Her hatred of Morel, liveliest at Paul's birth, conceives this means of alienating them." (XVII)
- 16 *Harvard English Studies*, I, Morton Bloomfield, ed. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 93-104.
- 17 Letter to Edward Garnett, 14 November 1912, *The Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Harry T. Moore, 2 vols. (New York: Viking Press, 1962), I, 161.
- 18 For psychoanalytic justification of the ending see Weiss, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-67.
- 19 While in American literature the movement westward and out of the city seems to typify the ambitious, one is aware of a counter-rhythm, particularly in the twentieth century as the frontier fantasy becomes more apparent.

- 20 Almost all Lawrence novels end equivocally. From Birkin and Ursula's strained words which end *Women in Love* to Mellor's very tentative letter which concludes *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Lawrence's characters go forth with a consistent degree of doubt and misgiving.