

Play of Differance in Sons and Lovers



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The aim of the present paper is to attempt a Derridean reading of Lawrence's conscious or unconscious lapse in surnaming the central family of the novel as Morel family in place of calling it Moral family. It seems as if this lapse in spellings did not matter for him. Instead of offering any justification this silent lapse, we may rather see the play in graphic different of 'e' or 'a'. This graphic difference between two apparently vocal notations, between two vowels, as Derrida would say, 'remains purely graphic, it is read or it is written, but it cannot be heard.'¹ The difference between Morel and Moral can be seen but cannot be heard. It cannot be apprehended in speech, and if Derrida were to say, it also bypasses the order of apprehension in general. It is offered by a mute mark by a tacit monument, by a pyramid. The 'a' of the Moral, thus, is not heard; it remains silent secret, a discrete as a tomb, which cannot be made to resonate. That's why Lawrence's moral concerns in Sons and Lovers as in other novels remain muted, despite his essay 'Morality and the novels' beside their manifestation in his narratives.

Lawrence subtly conveys his moral position through the word 'moral', because the word moral (with 'a') cannot be exposed. If we follow Derridean argument, Lawrence's morality of balance in human relationship - neither encroaching upon the other, nor allowing the other to encroach upon us - it is right to say that morality cannot be exposed, because there is nothing which is hidden according to Lawrence, human relationships are what they show themselves. Derrida also says:

*One can express only that what at
a certain moment become present, mani fest,
that which can be shown, pre sented as
something present, a being present in its truth, in the
truth of present or presence of the present (5-6).*

What Derrida means to say is that there no becoming present out of what is concealed. In Lawrence too, it seems, there is nothing concealed behind the phenomena or the appearance. When the Morels moved to bottom after marriage, and occupies the end house in one of the top blocks, Mrs. Moral got an opportunity to show her superiority over other collier women. Coming from a slightly well-off family and married to a collier, she had a strong aversion for which was common to the other wives of the collier community-poverty, ugliness and meanness. Besides, she had a drunkard husband. However, the breaking point came when she, one day, found an unpaid bill in Walter's pocket. She loved ideas, while Walter had no intellectual pretensions. She then turned to her children, first William and after his death to Paul.

As a consequence of this shift of attention a battle between the duo ensued 'a fearful battle that ended only with the death of one.'² Lawrence does not keep any mystery about the William's death; he rather shows the consequences of the battle in advance. This shows his faith in phenomenological ontology-that appearance embodies full reality. They are indication of themselves and refer to nothing but themselves. Lawrence is modern in this sense that he reduces existence to the series of appearance which manifest it. Lawrence also manifests his morals through what the members of Morel family with the inactions with other do. The aim of this reduction was to overcome dualism between morel written with 'e' and moral written with 'a'.

Lawrence removes, among others, the dualism of Cartesian mind and body. In philosophy

a basic dualism prevails. He described matter as being completely soulless and the mind as completely immaterial. For Lawrence, on the contrary, it is funny superstition regarding the body as if it were a container of the soul. The years drink up the wine, are the last throws the both away, 'the body, of course, being the bottle'³:

*Why should I look at my hand as
it so cleverly writes there words and
between that if is a man nothing
compared to the mind that discrete it?*

Is then very any huge difference between my hand and my brain?

Obviously Lawrence does not see any difference between his hand and his brain. Derrida also attempts to cross out difference. Now, he asks, if it is crossed out, what make possible the presentation of the being-present, which is near offered to the present or to anyone. Reserving itself, not exposing itself, as he adds, in regular fashion which 'exceeds the order of truth of a precise point but without dissimulating itself as something, as a mysterious being, in the occult of a non-knowledge or a hole with indeterminable borders (for eg., in a typology of castration)' Still morality exceeds particular relation for it will manifest in totality of its aspects. The way first William and then Paul act are further aspects of the same morality. Lawrence observes the following in his essay, 'Morality and the novels':

*If we think about it (pure relationship) we find
our life consists in achieving of a pure relationship
between ourselves and the living universe about us. This
is how 'save my soul' by accomplishing a pure
relationship between me and another person, me
and other people, me and a nation, me and
a race of men, me and the animal, me and the
trees, me and the flowers and the earth, me and the skies
and sun and the stars, me and the moon; an infinity of
pure relations, big and little, like the star of the skies.....*

Lawrence's pure relationship is thus no noumena, but a series of phenomena, encompassing the whole circumambient universe. This is how, like Derrida, he overcomes of being one its infinite relationships. Those relationships have no things in itself. It is all appearance, a total series of appearance and no hidden reality which would, as Jean-Paul Sartre also over, on the contrary, that 'to the extent that man had believed in noumenon relations, they have presented appearance is a pure negation....no other than of illusion and error.'⁴

'Moral' with 'a' for Lawrence also is no noumenon, but no more an illusion behind the scene of appearance, as Nietzsche would say then a full positively; its essence is appearance. That is why it cannot be exposed. 'Moral' is then the totality of its aspects in Sons & Lovers; it evince relationships which exchange any specific determination. Eventually, Mrs. Morel came to despise her husband. She turned to child William; she turned from the father. Walter also began to neglect her. In this context, **Lawrence writes:**

*He (Walter) had begun to neglect
her; the novelty of his own home
was gone. He had no grit, she said
bitterly to herself. (552)*

Then follows:

*What he felt just at the minute,
that was all to him. He could not
abide by anything. There was nothing at*

the back of all his show. (552)

And yet Walter 'resentment against his wife in all this manifests itself in his battles; he in being sensuous in nature fought back against Gertrude attempt to make him moral. In essence, being in totality, as Derrida would have it, never becomes wholly translucent to consciousness. According to him difference or moral written with 'a' would be exposed to disappearance as disappearance. It would risk appearing: disappearing'. In Sartrean terms expresses a rupture into being-in-itself and being-for-itself. Whereas the former is complete and full, totally given, and of course devoid of becoming, the latter is corresponds in human consciousness of luck. Walter can be taken to be full in his plenitude, but Gertrude feels that lack in his being: She would have him the much that he ought to be. So in seeking to make him nobler than he could be, she destroyed him.

Derrida would call it 'sheaf or the graphics of difference'. In the delineation of difference, according to him everything is strategic and adventurous and adds that it is strategic not because transcendent truth present outside the field of writing can govern theologically the totality of the field. Adventurous because this strategy is not oriented or a final goal, a telos. Derrida thus, as also Lawrence bring about the play of difference of both strategically and adventurously. This is no arche, no telos in the play of difference.

Here and elsewhere, Lawrence thinks of difference simultaneously, always coming back to that state that has been deferred. This is what Derrida calls the economic character of difference. He is in his essay difference observes that he must conceive of 'a play in whoever loss wins, and in which one loss and wins on every turn' (20). If the displaced presentation remains definitively and implacably postponed, it is not that a certain present remains absent or hidden, he adds. Further as Lawrence's deception of human relationships shows, difference rather maintains the relationship with that which we necessarily misconstrue, and which exceeds to alternative of presence and absence.

Derrida, like Lawrence, does not subscribe to the hidden unconscious. According to him, the unconscious is not hidden, 'virtual or potential. It differs from, and defers, itself; which

doubtless means that it is woven of differences, and also that it sends out delegates, representatives, proxies; but without any chance that the given of proxies might 'exist', might be present, be 'itself' somewhere, and even with less chance that it might become conscious.' (21)

With Clara, he too could not be at ease, nor was she particularly during the illness of her former husband. They were scarcely, any nearer each other. Lawrence feels as if they had been blind agents of a great force. To say this is to go back to the metaphysics. Lawrence, indeed had no faith in the, metaphysics of presence. There is no force nothing-in-itself behind the phenomena. Miriam and Clara are not thought as opposites, for the opposites cannot be thought together. Between them they have rather the play of difference. Had it not been Clara, there would have been some one else. Lawrence does not neglect the phenomenon of the lived body. Clara's body to him was enchanting. But he also could not submit himself to her. For, as Derrida says, 'the economic character of difference in no way implies that the deferred presence (read Miriam) can always be found again...' (20)

Paul was obsessed with Clara's arms and throat. He could see where the division was beginning for her breast. He would not leave her. In the difference, nothing is isolated. Only we defer on aspect awhile. Paul had a life apart from his mother-her sexual life. The rest she still kept. But he felt he had to conceal something from her and it irked him. Nevertheless, he wanted freedom from her.

Clara was happy, because she was sure of Paul, cut off as he was from both Miriam and Gertrude. But could the true of his relationship with Miriam with his be erased? Even in erasing as Derrida finds the mark of the erasure is left. The trace is simultaneously traced and erased- 'living and dead, and as always, living in the stimulation of life's preserved inscription. A pyramid...' (28) Clara's happiness was not unmixed. She was all the time conscious of Dawes presence - then he was upstairs - a physical sense of his presence in the same building and even he was official with her, she wanted to touch his chest, but she was simultaneously in love with Paul. Thus Lawrence could think without contradiction, or at least with-

out granting any pertinence, as Derrida would have it to such a contradiction which is perceptible and imperceptible in the trace. The early trace of her love for Dawes was lost in the invisibility without return after the dinner, and get it's very loss in sheltered, retained, as Derrida put in 'Differance' seen delayed. Clara sought permanence in Dawes. In Sartrean terms, she sought being-in-itself after seeking her freedom. But freedom is alliance with nothingness. Indeed, freedom occasions nothingness. Freedom is in the very nature of man. However freedom brings anxiety, once she because consciousness of herself as being free, i.e., for itself, she apprehends herself as lack. In Derrida,

lack is constitutive of differance between whole is considered to be plenitude and full and what it lacks.

For Lawrence, as for Derrida, this plenitude which as the same time has a hole in the heart is unnamable; it is a play of substitution of name, as for example, Gertrude, Miriam, Clara or women yet to be named as Paul moves toward his future possibilities, his expanding horizon, which will define his subjectivity, leaving behind his past and present, without any nostalgia for what lies at his back, or any hope for what lies before him.

R E F E R E N C E

- 1 Jacques Derrida, 'Differance', *Margins of Philosophy* (Brighton: Harvest Press, 1982) 3 All subsequent references are taken from this edition
- 2 D.H. Lawrence, 'Sons and Lovers', *The Great Novels of D.H. Lawrence* (London Magpie Books Ltd., 1993) 527. All subsequent references are taken from this edition.
- 3 D.H. Lawrence, 'Why the novel matters?' *20th Century, Literary Criticism* (Longman, 1972) 136.
- 4 Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1956)