Lawrence's *Paul Morel*

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Though well-written and knowledgeable, Meyers's biography seems to lack enthusiasm for its subject one way or another. At one point, Meyers appears to agree with Maugham's "betters" when he says, "Maugham never suffered from writer's block. He was hardworking, hasty, always driven and sometimes careless... Maugham applied himself, did his best and (even when dissatisfied) published it anyway." At another point, he argues that Maugham "wrote outstanding works in every genre: plays, stories and novels, essays, travel books and autobiographies... Maugham's books—tender and brutal, surprising and cynical—are always intelligent and entertaining," though in the preface Meyers refers to Maugham as "Somersault" for his jumping from one genre to another. However, the lack of enthusiasm may not be a problem so much with Meyers as with his chosen subject. As Meyers sums up, there are many reasons to admire Maugham both personally and artistically, but ultimately these qualities do not balance out the man's many flaws. That may be the real tragedy of Maugham's life.

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Lawrence's Paul Morel


MY unqualified congratulations to Cambridge University Press for the publication of Paul Morel, a volume that sets a new standard for accessible and provocative source material amid the already well-established record of excellence permeating the litany of Cambridge's definitive editions of D.H. Lawrence's prolific work. The book is impressively edited by Helen Baron, who provides a lengthy and incisive introduction that encompasses this lively and poignant early version of Sons and Lovers, in addition to important correlative documents in an intelligently conceived volume that includes fragments from the later third draft of the novel, and short episodes from this penultimate manuscript that were rewritten by Jessie Chambers, who hoped "to influence [Lawrence] into giving a kinder representation of herself and their teenage romance."

Because the characterization of Mrs. Morel remains so crucial to the situational context of Paul Morel and to Lawrence's conflicted perspective on his own mother, Baron wisely includes an evocative piece of fifteen pages from a novel planned by Lawrence on his mother's childhood
that was to be called *Matilda* and was initiated about the time that he began to write *Paul Morel*. Although Lawrence never finished this ambitious work, in my reading of the preserved fragment it is notable both for its depiction of Matilda’s powerful will and confidence (as a mere pre-adolescent) when she expresses her reluctance to kiss the parson, and of the conditioned hate for her father that she learns from her mother. As I later note in this review, it is precisely these elements in the short excerpt from *Matilda*—an awe over the mother’s power and a contempt for the father’s weakness—that receive significant emphases in the characterization of the parents in *Paul Morel*. Unlike other Cambridge editions of earlier versions of major Lawrence works that generally avoid editorial judgments about the quality of the variant drafts, Baron remains persuasive and outspoken on the issues of comparative achievement that inform the revisions and redraftings of *Sons and Lovers*. While it is understandable that editors will use their prefatory remarks to defend the design and inclusiveness of the works they edit, Baron aptly justifies her metaphoric claim about the disparate fragments of Lawrence’s art that she includes in the volume: “All have an illuminating role in relation to the two major fictions; rather like a mosaic of mirrors passing reflections back and forth between them.”

*Paul Morel* was composed from mid-March to July 1911, about sixteen months before Lawrence wrote *Sons and Lovers*. Baron carefully recounts the chronology of what amounts to an intensely preoccupying and palimpsestic form of composition by Lawrence during this period, as he fitfully struggles through the complex issues and multiple versions of his first masterpiece; it is a work that will provide his most detailed and passionate depiction in all his novels of the essential texture of his family life and young manhood. *Paul Morel* is the second of four drafts of the novel. The manuscript has no ending because Lawrence inexplicably abandoned the draft in the summer, and “the beginning, too, is now lost,” for “Lawrence threw away the first seventy-one pages when he rewrote them for the third draft.” In order to provide a sense of the events and themes that led up to the opening scene of this draft of *Paul Morel*, Baron includes the only existing pages of the third version in an Appendix that is as scrupulously annotated as the rest of this volume. The editor describes the numerous personal, family, health, and aesthetic considerations involved in Lawrence’s protracted composition of *Paul Morel*, as she highlights the role of such relevant events as his devastating illness in the winter of 1911–1912, the earlier deterioration and
death of his mother from cancer in the summer and fall of 1910, his difficult courtship of Louie Burrows leading to their broken engagement in February, 1912, and—most pertinently—the exhausting relationship with Jessie Chambers throughout this period that resonates throughout for the emotional context and frenzied composition of the novel.

In her extensive discussion of Jessie's reaction to Lawrence's fictionalized depiction of their friendship and affair, Baron is evenhanded and intelligent in her investigation, as she demonstrates Jessie's myopia about key aspects of her connection to Lawrence while she also stresses the legitimacy of one of Jessie's major complaints about the accuracy of Lawrence's characterizations: “that Lawrence frequently represented activity as having taken place earlier in their lives than was the case,” with the inevitable result that he often “imposed an emotionally significant meaning on to exchanges that took place early in their friendship.” It is a credit to Lawrence's own talent at negative capability and to his own unremitting professionalism that he preserved the various pages that include Jessie's criticism of the fiction so he could refer to her objections (but not necessarily embody them!) as he revised and discarded the various drafts. Baron frankly concludes that because of variant manuscripts, missing sections, and frequent uncertainties about which draft Jessie indicts, “the effect of Jessie’s comments on the successive drafts of the novel cannot be assessed.”

The most rewarding aspect of the publication of Paul Morel must be its pure excellence as a work of fiction, and its inevitable potential for provoking resonant speculations on the difference in this novel's style and scene from its more famous (and completed) later incarnation as Sons and Lovers. Put simply, this work—in its second and third drafts—is delightful in all respects, and it reflects a texture, tone, and rhythm that provide striking contrasts to the fourth and final draft of the novel. Although Baron does not contemplate the following literary analogy, I regard the comparison as reasonably consistent with her own analysis, and as justified by that luminous mirror-mosaic metaphor she employed in her introduction: in several compelling ways, the relation between Paul Morel and Sons and Lovers is not unlike the intriguing linkage between Joyce's Stephen Hero and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, and not merely because of the writers' inclinations in each case was to destroy all or part of the initial manuscripts. In both instances the earlier versions of Joyce's and Lawrence's self-defining and autobiographical fictions are more lively, less internalized, more satiri-
cal, less uninterruptedly serious, more unashamedly imbued with melodramatic incident, and less powerfully and intricately designed as sustained works of art. As with Joyce’s two completed and contrasting efforts at imposing artistic pattern on the choices and direction of his life, we must also acknowledge gratitude for the existence of the incomplete but revealing drafts of Lawrence’s *bildungsroman* that the Cambridge volume urges us to examine.

It is an energizing examination for any Lawrence enthusiast to undertake. *Paul Morel* contains a series of vivid and revealing moments and vignettes, and I list here only a few to convey a summary sense of the work’s intrinsic appeal and its profound difference from *Sons and Lovers*: as Walter attempts—in his own irreverent and undisciplined manner—to recover from serious illness, this irascible man fools Mrs. Morel by secretly drinking beer happily provided by his friend Jerry, and then he gratefully chews two sprigs of parsley that the resourceful Jerry produces to cover-up the odor of alcohol from the lurking wife; Mrs. Morel helps an incompetent local minister with his weekly sermons, offering us a documented sense of her agility with words when she memorably responds with perfect pitch and metaphor to the minister’s anxiety about the legitimacy of his preaching sermons that have benefited from so much unacknowledged guidance in their composition: “Is it right, do you think, to dig a heavy, rich soil, and to lighten it with sand — ?— or should we scatter the seed on it just as the Lord or the weather left it?”; the varied and poignant incidents that display the father’s special closeness to the cherubic baby son, Arthur—a boy who will be accidentally murdered years later by an enraged Walter Morel, who in turn will lose the will to live after the tragedy, and whose understated death will occur at the end of *Paul Morel* as the pathetic fadeout of a long-extinguished soul; the dramatized “hell in the child’s soul” as Paul watches the destructive passions unleashed in his parents’ often violent quarrels—arguments depicted with a more acute threat of physical injury than any in *Sons and Lovers*; a young Paul listens with rapt attention to the scary stories read by his talented but mischievous older sister, Annie; the pre-scient and precociously sensual touch of hands between Miriam and Paul when he is only six years old; the jocular scenes with the pet rabbit—an episode later published as a short piece but excluded from *Sons and Lovers*—with Paul teasing a vulnerable Miriam about baking the creature in the oven; Paul’s fierce fight with his most intimate friend, Alec, a scene containing the early signatures of a love-hate relationship
and of unconventional male bonding through passionate touch that Lawrence will develop in later works of fiction; Paul's Hamletic contemplation of whether and how to kill his father; Lawrence's rumination—more confessional than comparable passages in *Sons and Lovers*—about Paul's compulsive need for the close physical presence of his mother, as he “never knew a finer bliss than to have his mother lying beside him while the night was still young,” Paul's proud presentation of horse manure to his mother as a special “offering to her” for use in the garden.

Amid such obvious psychological cruxes noted above—of Paul's need for this mother's bodily presence, of his desire to please her with gifts that seem to confirm the lingering effect of the compulsive, excremental stages of his development, and of his excitement at violently engaging Alec perhaps to confirm and/or resolve notions about his own masculinity—there is a goldmine in *Paul Morel* for future excavation by Lawrence critics and biographers who surely will theorize over such issues as Oedipal longing, gender confusion, male intimacy, parental instability, and adolescent sexual anxiety. In this regard, the fragment that Baron includes from the abbreviated third manuscript confirms for me a sense that is cumulatively conveyed in the longer second draft: the earlier versions of *Sons and Lovers* remain considerably more favorable (compared to *Sons and Lovers*) to the “case” of Mrs. Morel than of Walter. In addition, both drafts often convey more uncritical awe about the innate power of any female and—as the correlative notion—about the need for men to connect with such female power if they are to lead productive lives. These celebrated notions of Lawrence will surface in more elaborate form in *The Rainbow* in 1915, but they appear to recede as Lawrence revises *Paul Morel* into *Sons and Lovers*.

There is more to this gynocentric bias in *Paul Morel* than is conveyed simply by the figure of the diminished father, or by the emphasis on Mrs. Morel's verbal dexterity, or by the contemplations of patricide by Paul as a way to rescue his mother. In one resonant scene, for example, Paul feels a sense of profound and devoted love for his mother at virtually the same moment he experiences his first significant and romantic attraction to Miriam; as Lawrence deftly manages this tricky triangulation of character, the pull towards the mother is presented in the scene as a more genuine reflection of Mrs. Morel's magnetic self rather than as a dangerous product of the incipient pathology in the relation between mother and son. A more telling moment occurs in the third draft after Walter cuts off...
William's hair. Here is the intrusively prescriptive passage that anticipates central notions in Lawrence's fiction of the next few years, but the lines significantly are omitted in *Sons and Lovers* after the scene of William's enforced haircut by his father: "No man can live unless his life is rooted in some woman: unless some woman believes in him, and so fixes his belief in himself." This dominant sense in *Paul Morel* that celebrates a woman's ability to virtually assign the fate of her man is substantiated further by noting a small but meaningful difference between the third and fourth drafts concerning a memorable scene. In the midst of a raging battle with Walter in *Sons and Lovers*, Gertrude holds Paul to the sun, and Lawrence describes her equivocations: "If he lives ... what will become of him—what will he be?" In the earlier draft from the same scene, Lawrence's refracted narrative perspective appears more inflated about Mrs. Morel's power to bless the child and command his future: "And then, if he lives, he will perhaps be a great man." This is the same Mrs. Morel who manages to rally her husband to relative health after the onset of an often deadly brain fever. As Lawrence turns from these drafts to write *Sons and Lovers*, he will see the danger of the powerful mother more clearly, and will extend the fictional life of the father. I leave it to others to speculate on the reasons for Lawrence's more mature perspective, and I thank Cambridge for this remarkable publication.

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Lawrence's Paintings


THIS RECENT edition of D. H. Lawrence's paintings resists simple categorization. An oversized and heavy volume, it looks like a coffee-table book with its large print, glossy pages, and colorful reproductions, but I suspect that it will be lugged to class by many teachers of Lawrence who are eager to introduce their students to this lesser-known aspect of the writer's creativity. With its lengthy introduction by noted Lawrence specialist Keith Sagar, the book functions somewhat as a scholarly text, yet it is devoid of such scholarly apparatuses as footnotes and a complete literature review. Something of a hybrid, *D. H. Lawrence's Paintings* is nonetheless appealing for being a "mixed marriage" of genres (to appropriate one of Lawrence's own working titles for...