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From Fathers and Sons to Sons and Lovers

From the moment Oedipus met Laius at the crossroads to Thebes, the conflict between fathers and sons has been indigenous to Western literature. In the mid-eighteenth century, Dr. Johnson summarized its universality when he explained to the young Boswell that "there must always be a struggle between a father and son, while one aims at power and the other at independence."¹ Eighteenth-century English literature recognized the demise of paternity, but it was the nineteenth-century that dramatized the struggle of its defeat. In a series of literary works the age confronted, resisted and altered the issue of family conflict from its traditional antagonists to a new set of figures.

In general, literature between 1850 and 1922 displayed a fascination with family conflict. From *Père Goriot* to *Buddenbrooks*, European as well as English writing made the family and its incompatibility a central theme. Gradually, a pattern emerged: the father as the dominant authority was replaced by the mother, who in turn was supplanted by her son's lover. Eventually, the lover was rejected and, in an effort to reinstate authority, the son searched for an acceptable paternal figure, in some cases leading to a homosexual association. Tracing this important theme through a variety of nineteenth and twentieth century texts reveals that the displacement of parental figures in Victorian literature strongly altered the subject matter and focus of modern fiction.

The predominance of the family in nineteenth-century fiction is striking. The eighteenth-century novel contained problems of family identity but only as an aspect of plot, artificially unravelling the complications of the story. In the nineteenth-century novel, however, identity and parentage became elements of theme and, increasingly, of technique. Independence, not identity, was the major source of conflict as the son of the Victorian family, who found his freedom but did not know what to do with it, became the hero of the modern novel.

The theme of family conflict led to new ways of presenting the self in fiction. With the complexity and instability of human relations dominating the subject matter of fiction, novelists had to discover new ways of conveying the resulting insecurity to the reader. The focus of character became interior and psychological, as external and circumstantial features decreased in importance and reliability. In *The Way of All Flesh*, for example, Butler illustrated the difficulty of an author's trying to find an appropriate point of view to narrate the story of parental abuse and youthful rebellion by relying on the cynical Overton to recount the life of Ernest Pontifex. With the change in the perception of the hero's relation to his family came a change in the presentation of character.

Mr. Chester in *Barnaby Rudge* indicates the nature of the conflict between fathers and sons so prominent in the fiction of the Victorian period: "A son . . . unless he is old enough to be a companion . . . is not the kind of thing to have about one. He is a restraint upon his father, his father is a restraint upon him, and they make each other mutually uncomfortable." This view understates the powerful intellectual, religious and temperamental disagreements that make up a good deal of the conflict within the Victorian family which James Anthony Froude epitomised in his remark about his clergyman father: he " 'never spoke even in private of feeling or sentiment and never showed any in word or action.' " ²

In general the son is conspicuous as the liberator who challenges, rejects and sometimes destroys the existing values. The "clash of two temperaments", to borrow Edmund Gosse's phrase from *Father and Son*, is physically and mentally present in works diverse as Arnold's epic tale, "Sohrab and Rostum," where total admiration of the father by the son results in the son's unwitting murder by his father in battle, or Robert Louis Stevenson's *Weir of Hermiston* where the unfinished story suggests the possible judgment of a son by his father for murder. There are few, if any, forgiving fathers in Victorian literature and, correspondingly, virtually no prodigal sons. ³

The three Victorian works that have traditionally made patriarchal rejection their thematic center are *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, the *Autobiography* of John Stuart Mill and *The Way of All Flesh*. Collectively, they expose the fallacy of what Samuel Butler calls the "British parent theory." This is the conventional belief of fathers in their own experience and righteousness for guiding their children, especially their sons. Often, this authority becomes dogmatic and takes shape behind a set of principles that becomes a system. In the three classic

Victorian treatments of this theme, the cause of filial rebellion is a system of orderly development and discipline that neglects emotions, spontaneity and independence imposed upon youth. Love, intellect and religion are the individual themes of each work but they are united by the protagonists' determination to resist a patterned structure of behavior. The complexity of the father-son conflict, however, lies in its ambivalent nature of rejection and acceptance as Freud noted: "They [the sons] hated the father who stood so powerfully in the way of their sexual demands and their desire for power, but they also loved and admired him."⁴

Through the opposition between Sir Austin, his System and his son, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* contains the most dramatic presentation of dominance and rejection in the mid-nineteenth-century novel. The breakdown of the System and incapacity of Sir Austin to deal with his son's infatuations, pursuits or spirits lead to division and alienation between them. The cause is partly the inability of the father to wrestle free of his System and partly the ambivalence of the son towards his father. Willing to forgive Richard after his impetuous and scandalous marriage to Lucy Desborough, Sir Austin cannot yet extricate himself from his dispassionate and egotistical behavior: "though love was strong [for Richard,] and was moving him to a straightforward course, the last tug of vanity drew him still aslant."⁵

The complicated tensions in *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* originate in the strain between the System and the reality that surrounds it. As a father, Sir Austin sees his greatest responsibility to the principle of obedience: "I require not only that my son should obey; I would have him guiltless of the impulse to gainsay my wishes—feeling me in him stronger than his undeveloped nature . . ." (p. 118). But emotions betray his System and undo Richard as well: "Feeling, that's the slayer, coz. Sentiment! 'tis the cajolery of existence" exclaims Adrian (p. 443). Although sentiment is to Sir Austin "the distraction of our modern age in everything . . . distorting the image of the life we live" (p. 310), it is inescapable. The difficulty Sir Austin faces is that the scientific approach fails the test of human experience as the narrator so often reiterates: "He spoke so securely, as if wisdom were to him more than the love of his son. And yet he did love his son" (p. 310). Instinct and natural feeling are the fundamental complications in the father-son relation. After witnessing the devotion, conscience and duty of Lucy, Sir Austin admits, in misery and embarrassment, that his System has been presumptuous, that

"instinct had so far beaten science" (p. 463). His final position is traditional: "He took the common ground of fathers, forgetting his System when it was absolutely on trial. False to his son it could not be said that he had been: false to his System he was" (p. 474).

The behaviour of Richard in the novel confuses the father-son theme. We have a father who rejects his son ideologically but not emotionally. We have a son who tolerates and, at moments, even loves his father but must, because of his own moral turpitude, reject him. Confessing his lack of faithfulness to Lucy, Richard alienates his father—or, rather, confirms at last the need for a System to curb the vices of human nature. The self-deception of Sir Austin is redeemed only by his final act when human nature triumphs over Science. In deciding to tell the ill Richard that Lucy has died, Sir Austin acts out of instinct, not reason, but in doing so destroys his ideal of his son. Fathers cannot understand themselves nor their sons and the novel ends in a confusion of emotions marked by the coda provided by Lady Blandish. Of Sir Austin she remarks that "if he has saved his son's body, he has given the death-blow to his heart" (p. 492).

Science, the only benefactor of Sir Austin's experiment with human nature, is the link between Meredith's novel and Mill's *Autobiography*. Both works illustrate the attempt by fathers to establish an orderly, rational, objective means of education for their sons. But for each, knowledge attempts to replace love. What the Pilgrims Scrip was to Sir Austin, Greek was to James Mill.

The intense relation between the elder and younger Mill finds articulation in the identity the son expresses with the father in the opening section of the *Autobiography*. The second paragraph begins with this sentence: "I was born in London, on the 20th of May 1806, and was the eldest son of James Mill, the author of the History of British India."⁶ Conspicuously absent is any reference to his mother. Throughout the *Autobiography* John Stuart Mill consciously tempers his criticism of his father. The first allusion to a contentious issue is the failure of the father to permit the son to express a negative view of religion and belief (p. 28). The moralities of the father were often those of "Socratici vivi" and took the form of "brief sentences," not unlike the Pilgrim's Scrip. Mill senior did not tolerate pleasurable actions and believed over-valuing them led to many of the misfortunes of life (p. 31). Intellectual pleasures alone surpassed all others, while temperate action was the primary guide to any other activities. Like Sir Austin Feverel, James Mill believed feelings were of little value. In a tone of uncertain acceptance, John Stuart Mill summarizes that

"the education which my father gave me, was in itself much more fitted for training me to *know* than to *do*" (p. 23).

Only at the end of the survey of his education in the published version of the *Autobiography* does Mill introduce a critique of his rigid upbringing. Gently, he complains that although his father "saved" him from "the demoralizing effects of school life, he made no effort to provide me with any sufficient substitute for its practicalizing influences" (p. 23). When the criticism is personally directed to his father, the son displays a strain in the tone of his writing. Feelings of displeasure never make their way to the surface in the published version; a self-conscious censure acting to check any disloyalty always seems to be present. The harshest criticism Mill allows himself in the early chapters of the *Autobiography* is a generalization applicable to innumerable Victorian fathers: "He resembled most Englishmen in being ashamed of the signs of feeling, and, by the absence of demonstration, starving the feelings themselves" (p. 32).

It is the "Early Draft" that contains the unrestricted criticism of the father deleted from the posthumously published text. In comments directed explicitly at his father, his educational methods and the family, John Stuart Mill reveals the frustration and dissatisfaction of his youthful apprenticeship. In particular, he cites his father's impatience with his "stupidity" and "lax habits" and repeats the frequent charge that he was "like a person who had not the organs of sense." In a cancelled passage the son confesses that his education was "not an education of love but of fear" and that the children of the father "neither loved him, nor, with any warmth of affection, any one else." The negativism of his early experience leads John Stuart Mill to conclude: "I believe there is less personal affection in England than in any other country of which I know anything."⁷

The death of James Mill in the *Autobiography* is impersonally presented. The son calls the father "one of the most original thinkers of his time" and celebrates his distinguished contribution to "analytic psychology" (p. 122). But two sentences reveal an understanding of the constraining influences of the father upon the son:

Deprived of my father's aid, I was also exempted from the restraints and reticences by which that aid had been purchased. I did not feel that there was any other radical writer or politician to whom I was bound to defer, further than consisted with my own opinions (p. 123).

The loss of the father is balanced by the welcomed gain of intellectual

and moral independence which the second sentence confirms.

The objective narrative of the death of James Mill is surprising because of the importance of the account of the death of the father of Marmontel and the effect upon John Stuart Mill described in Chapter V. The event, narrated in the *Memoirs*, was, of course, the source of the renewal of feelings for the young Mill (p. 85). The ability of Marmontel to supplant and continue the work of his own father is a psychological projection of the desire and later action of the younger Mill. This makes the passage on restraint more provocative and ironic. Freed from the restrictions of an awesomely impressive father-teacher, the young Mill seized his opportunity to, at once, set loose his own views: "I resolved henceforth to give full scope to my own opinions and modes of thought" (p. 123). This too is ironic, however, since he preceded this declaration with the statement "having the complete confidence of [Sir William] Molesworth" (p. 123). Mill continued, throughout his life, to seek the approval of others he perceived in positions of paternal authority regardless of their sex. His relationship with Harriet Taylor—"the one to whom most of all is due" (p. 3)—and, later, her daughter, makes this clear.

In the *Autobiography* there is, nonetheless, a certain eagerness for independence in thought and action—not open rebellion but a chance for John Stuart Mill to test himself as himself, no longer existing as the intellectual dependent of another. The urgent desire to please felt by the son, and analogous to a schoolmaster and his pupil, is undercut by the pleasure expressed in John Stuart Mill's friendship with Charles Austin. The source of this satisfaction is his feeling that for the first time he is "not a pupil under teachers, but a man among men", that is, an equal (p. 48).

The father-son relationship in the *Autobiography* is complex and shifts between guilt and freedom. Noting his occasional objections to his father's thought, the son records that at such moments he felt like a "deserter from his [the father's] standard" (p. 108). Discussing their differences brought "only pain to both" and, often, he held back his comments unless it appeared disingenuous to remain silent (p. 108). The latent conflict between father and son in the *Autobiography* is like that seen in Meredith; a system of expected behavior is in conflict with the need for spontaneous action. Criticism of the father in the published autobiography is an intellectual act which surpasses emotional involvement for the younger Mill. For the son, the father is an issue rather than a person, an idea, not a human being.

If Sir Austin deceives himself by his belief in his System, and James

Mill through his faith in rationalism and the Utilitarian ethic, Theobald Pontifex consecrates himself via religion. In *The Way of All Flesh*, fathers and sons are shown to be in bitter contest with one another. The story of the Pontifexes is the story of antagonism between a series of fathers, grandfathers and great-grandfathers who succeed in becoming more intolerant of one another until the son of the present generation, Ernest, renounces both his father and his own children, achieving the state of "orphanage" he so admires. The cause of the conflict is disobedience which St. Paul had linked to sodomy, fornication, envy, murder, deceit and hate of God (Romans 1:28-30). Disregard of the demands of elders in the novel leads to quick action by fathers, usually explained as "checking the first signs of self-will."⁸

As the narrator Overton remarks, parent-child relationships at the beginning of the nineteenth-century were "far from satisfactory." In one of the few literary statements concerned with the historical association of parents and children, Overton analyzes the eighteenth-century "violent type of father" portrayed in Fielding, Smollett and others, and Jane Austen's scepticism regarding the behavior of parents, particularly fathers. In the Elizabethan period, he notes, there was a generally hospitable association between fathers and children, citing the more or less compatible relations of fathers and sons in Shakespeare. "A long course of Puritanism" and familiarity with the stern patriarchs of Judaism seem to have altered that harmony. The restriction of natural pleasures soon became the obligation of every parent as a new dogma appeared: "No duty could be more paramount than that of teaching a child to obey its parents in all things" (pp. 20-21, 78).

Theobald is the strictest father in the novel, although he is not unlike his contemporaries, Overton adds (p. 21). As a clergyman, a profession he once tried to renounce, Theobald believes he must uphold rigorous and righteous standards. Dramatic evidence of his intolerance is his beating of Ernest when the child mispronounces the word "come." James Anthony Froude, however, records the normalcy of being whipped for various childhood indiscretions.⁹ Like *Richard Feverel* and the *Autobiography* of John Stuart Mill, the novel recounts the growing liberation, more accurately, here, rebellion, of the son from the father. In this work, however, it is a violent wrenching, vividly conveyed through educational and urban experiences.

It is no surprise that Ernest rejects his parents so completely when he leaves Coldbath prison. His six months in jail convince him that

only those who are without parents in the world can triumph, as his idols Towneley and Handle illustrate. Passionately, Ernest wishes for a total break from his father and mother, arguing that if there are orphanages for children who have lost their parents, there should be "harbours of refuge for grown men who have not yet lost them" (p. 257). The rejection scene in Chapter 70 marks an important moment in the parent-child, father-son theme in the late nineteenth-century novel. Boldly and nakedly, the child rejects the parents, unleashing his resentment and frustration against an authoritarian force. No other Victorian writing competes with this scene for its scathing honesty and not until Kafka renounced his own father in a letter of 1919 is there such an undisguised expression of paternal hatred and displeasure in literature.

The true father of Ernest is, of course, Overton. In his sceptical but kindly manner, he oversees the education of his godson and provides the single source of his salvation: money. Managing the money left by Aletha into a handsome legacy, Overton frees Ernest from a life of sordidness and failure. Through his detached comic persona, Overton also explains for the reader the principles of evolution and psychology that make the behavior of Ernest and his family understandable. In his capacity as Virgil to Ernest's Dante, Overton expresses the ideas that shaped Butler's own thinking and habits, especially the value of maturity, bachelorhood, independence and money. In the final chapter, Overton confesses that Ernest "has been a son and more than a son" to him and fears that at times he has been "to him more like a father than I ought" (p. 355).

Overton is an important transitional figure in the treatment of fathers in Victorian and early modern fiction because he is a precursor of other men who assume the role of fathers for young men who have rejected their own. Strether in *The Ambassadors* and Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses* are two immediate examples. *The Way of All Flesh* summarizes the Victorian relation between fathers and sons through a painful exposition of generations of distrust and dislike. It compresses the features found in Meredith and Mill into a chronicle of family abuse that rejects the ideal of the family unit and finds purpose in stepsons, orphans and children brought up without imposed goals. It marks a shift in the handling of the father-son theme, replacing a dogmatic authoritarian scheme with a certain *laissez faire* philosophy demonstrated in the novel by Ernest's treatment of his own children and Overton's distanced but loving association with his godson.¹⁰ Substituting for the immediacy of father-son relations is the arm's length involvement of others who assume the role of parents.

A curious coda to Butler's treatment of the theme is a notebook entry entitled "My Son." It is a bitter-sweet address to an imaginary son beginning with the sentence "I have often told my son that he must begin by finding me a wife to become his mother who shall satisfy both himself and me." The paragraph continues by describing the rejection of the son's demands by Butler, although "his thin ghost visits me at times" affecting him so strongly that he is "half-inclined" to take his chances with a wife. But in fear he draws back from such an act and cynically concludes that if he did marry and have a child, it "would probably be a girl." This intriguing entry suggests the complexity of Butler's attitude towards fathers and sons. Clearly, he desires a son but simultaneously fears one, or fears the relationship that might develop. Ernest expresses a similar anxiety at the opening of Chapter 85 in the novel, justifying his separation from his children as the prevention of hatred growing between them. The passage also shows the way Butler relies on irony as a response to human experience and undermines his admiration of bachelorhood referred to earlier in the *Notebooks*, particularly in reference to Melchizedec, the "incarnate bachelor." Finally, the entry displays, with greater sensitivity, his critical ideas of the family.¹¹

Women, particularly mothers, play a minor role in all three of these works. Part of the problem may be sociological and domestic. In the "Early Draft" of the *Autobiography*, John Stuart Mill referred to "that rarity in England, a really warm hearted mother," although Ruskin and Edmund Gosse celebrated the devotion of their mothers.¹² However, in the Victorian novel mothers are often secondary characters and when they are present, they are often sentimentalized as Amelia Osborne in *Vanity Fair*, idealized as Lady Castlewood in *Henry Esmond*, "evil" as Mrs. Clenham in *Little Dorrit* or mysterious as the Princess in *Daniel Deronda*. But with the growing social and political presence of women in the nineteenth-century and a developing awareness of the psychological make-up of sons, the mother increasingly dominates the life of fiction, fashioning a psychological and sexual boundary for male characters. Matthew Bagnet in *Bleak House* alludes to this change when he suggests that "some men rarely revert to their father, but seem, in the bank-books of their remembrance, to have transferred all the stock of filial affection into their mother's name." In reaction to the dominant, over-powering father figure who checked all resistance, the child turned to the sympathetic, consoling mother whom Freud called "the first love-object."¹³

In the Victorian period the role of women altered from a submissive, often frivolous being to a forceful and vigorous figure of family importance if not domestic control. By mid-century, the intellectual historian W.E.H. Lecky could write in his *History of European Morals* that "morally, the general superiority of women over men is, I think, unquestionable," while Ruskin could assert that "woman's power is for rule, not for battle—and her intellect. . . [for] ordering, arrangement and decision." Mill's comment from the 1850's that his own mother failed "to make herself loved, looked up to, or even obeyed" was no longer true in the final decades of the century.¹⁴

Adoration of motherhood created by the confluence of an attenuated attitude toward the Madonna ideal in the Victorian age and sustained by the religious impulses of the day, began to shift. In the family, her presence became dominance, her voice authority, especially over children.¹⁵ Dependency naturally resulted. The awareness of the authority of mothers in the family is indicated by the titles of a series of books that started to appear with increasing frequency in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. They included Edward R. Sullivan's *Woman, the Predominant Partner* (1894), Jane Ellice Hopkins, *The Power of Womanhood: or, Mothers and Sons* (1899) and Catherine G.H. Gallichan's *The Age of Mother-Power* (1914).

Ascendant feminism, soon to crystallize into the suffragette movement, extended the dominance of women from idealized mothers to feminist radicals. In the fiction of this period, mothers displayed an essential, powerful and increasingly necessary role, assuming the position once held by the father in shaping and directing the lives of the sons. Three works that illustrate the emergence of controlling mothers and prepare us for the final shift to sons and their lovers are *The Way We Live Now* by Anthony Trollope, *Daniel Deronda* by George Eliot and *The Return of the Native* by Thomas Hardy. In these works, mothers rule, or come to rule, their sons, supplanting patriarchal figures and assuming fatherly duties.

In Trollope's novel, Lady Carbury is the female counterpart to the male force, Auguste Melmotte. The difference is that Lady Carbury begins with nothing and devotes herself full-time to finding an heiress for her dissolute and irresponsible son, while Auguste Melmotte begins with the reputation of an incalculable fortune but ends with nothing in his search for an eligible son-in-law. Both parents understand marriage as an investment with dividends, shares and profits

Marriage in the novel becomes the institutionalization of money, status and privilege.

Lady Carbury is an early example of a dominating mother who is capable of renouncing personal pleasure for the advancement of her son. She tries to manage his life, but the recalcitrant son, Sir Felix, continually objects to such interference. Only when he realizes that Marie Melmotte is "simply . . . the means by which a portion of Mr. Melmotte's wealth might be conveyed to his uses" does he join with his mother in deceiving the Melmottes.¹⁶ His gambling and drinking, however, lead to intolerable situations, including, at one point, forgetting to meet Marie in order to elope to New York.

The literary ambitions of Lady Carbury, a widow seeking a fashionable and successful career as a novelist, are tangential to her main concern, her son. In spite of his squandering her modest fortune, Sir Felix holds a privileged family position marked by continual forgiveness for his errors. Lady Carbury knowingly spoils him and does not realize how much harm he has caused her until the end of the novel. At the advice of her soon-to-be husband, the editor Mr. Broune, she agrees to separate from Sir Felix, sending him to Germany in the company of an English clergyman. Until this moment, however, Trollope vividly, at times excessively, makes us realize that Sir Felix is the "real inner life" of Lady Carbury and her single, "absorbing interest" (p. 100, I.)

Although Trollope fails to develop the psychological relationship between the mother and son, he provides enough statements in the novel to show the intense connection between the ambitious mother and the lackadaisical son. The language and imagery he uses D.H. Lawrence will later enlarge:

He [Sir Felix] was the one thing in the world that overpowered her . . . her love for her son mastered her, —and she knew it. As it was so, could it be fit that she should marry another man? (p. 293-4, I)

Only after repeated abuses of her money, position and friends, does Lady Carbury revise her attitude toward her son. The second volume of the novel details their disassociation.

In this novel of intense domestic entanglement and strife, with daughters ruining or running away from fathers and sons competing with fathers for authority, Lady Carbury stands out as the single matriarchial figure who tries to alter social destiny and financial status. She foreshadows other mothers whose attachment to their sons is no less protective, although more overtly sexual.

The Way We Live Now also demonstrates the dissolution of the father-son theme. No father succeeds in having the respect of his son, a condition Trollope ironically illustrates by the first title Lady Carbury records for her novel: *The Faultless Father* (the second is *The Mysterious Mother*). The fathers that exist in the novel are failures. Auguste Melmotte turns out to be the stepfather of Marie and has no interest in his daughter other than her property. Roger Carbury is accepted unwillingly as surrogate father to Paul Montague, while the inept Adolphus Longestaffe has his power taken over by his son, Dolly. The tiresome Daniel Ruggles typifies father-son relations in the book: he quarrels with his only son and exiles him from home. The angry statement Melmotte makes to his daughter epitomizes the antagonism between fathers and their children in the work: "Do you mean that you, my own child, will attempt to rob your father just at the moment you can destroy him by your wickedness?" (p. 256-7, II). In his assumption of a paternal role, only Roger Carbury becomes a genuine father, accepting Hetta Carbury, whom he truly loves, not as Paul Montague's wife, but as his daughter (p. 407, II).

The Way We Live Now is a transitional text in the evolution of family conflict from the Victorian to the Edwardian age. It amalgamates the father-son dichotomy with a strong mother-son affection and suggests the focus later novels will expand. As fathers lose their stature and become "ruled" by their children, mothers have a greater, more powerful place in the psychological and social life of the family.

A significant illustration of the importance of this change is Book VII of *Daniel Deronda*, published in 1876, the year after Trollope's novel. Entitled "The Mother and The Son," the section reveals the increased power the idea and image of a mother has over her son. Long a cause of mystery and intrigue, the mother is the source of Deronda's anxiety about his identity. Preparing for their meeting in Genoa, Deronda admits that:

The tender yearning after a being whose life might have been the worse for not having his care and love, the image of a mother who had not had all her dues whether of reverence or compassion, had long been secretly present with him in his observation of all the women he had come near.¹⁷

"Spiritual distance", however, marks their encounter as Deronda confirms the secret that has long troubled him, his Jewishness (p. 470). Assuming she had succeeded in making Deronda an English

gentleman and opposed to Judaism, the Princess is shocked by his powerful, emotional acceptance of his Jewish identity. The difficulty for Deronda is understanding his mother's avoidance of her Jewishness and reluctance to admit to her son her identity and origins. Deronda strives to "comprehend" her resentment against her father's orthodoxy and imposed pattern of Jewish life in opposition to her desire to be a singer. The powerful tale of his mother's rebellion against her father pains Deronda who pleads with her to forgive her father and allow her son to aid her. She refuses, arguing that she could never accept what she has hated for a lifetime.

The four chapters of their relationship in Book VII are a dazzling concentration of family conflict culminating in the mother's assertion of her dominance over men: "Men have been subject to me" she pronounces (p. 501). Variousy described as a "veiled figure," "mysterious Fate," "sorceress" and "dreamed visitant from some region of departed mortals", the Princess exerts a dramatic influence over her son caused by startling revelations and profound disagreements. Paradoxically, she satisfies his self-knowledge but confuses his feeling of love. The image, rather than the fact, seems more satisfactory to him. Their meeting, however, clarifies Deronda's identity and allows him to marry Mirah by the end of the novel.

If Lady Carbury rules in the world of society, and the Princess in the realm of mystery and identity, Mrs. Yeobright in *The Return of the Native* dominates nature and the Heath. Her presence or absence (as when her spirit affects Clym after she dies) is a compelling element in the actions of her son. Her fundamental method, anticipating mother figures in various modern works, is to create guilt. Clym, arguing that he is old enough to know what is best for him, meets this response: "Best? Is it best for you to injure your prospects for such a voluptuous, idle woman [Eustacia Vye] as that? . . . You give up your whole thought—you set your whole soul—to please a woman." "I do and that woman is *you*" he answers.¹⁸ Accused of rebelling against his mother, Clym supports his decision in the face of his mother's desperate plea: "You have come only to distress me, a lonely woman, and shorten my days!" (p. 210). Dejected, Clym leaves, determined to assert his independence. Mrs. Yeobright is the mother as manipulator and as victim, advising, directing, interfering. She summarizes her condition when she says to Eustacia that she is "only a poor woman who has lost a son" (p. 248).

The principle that motivates Mrs. Yeobright and her actions is as

clear as it is traditional: "he is a foolish man who neglects the advice of his parent" (p. 249). As Clym's condition worsens in the novel with his blindness, solitude and unhappiness overcoming his earlier innocence and romanticism, his mother's sympathy returns. But coincidence and misunderstanding lead her to believe Clym has rejected her when he fails to answer the knock at his cottage (Book IV, Ch. VI). She concludes that Eustacia "must have set him against me" (p. 290). Hardy does not enlarge this conflict but stresses the remorse and chagrin of Clym when he discovers his injured mother on the Heath. As Aeneas carried his injured father, Clym carries his wounded mother, and at that moment, as Hardy conscientiously explains to the reader, "the chasm in their lives which his love for Eustacia had caused was not remembered . . . and to him the present joined continuously with that friendly past that had been their experience before the division" (pp. 296-7). But moments after her death, we learn of her final, withering accusation as Susan Nunsuch's son repeats her charge that "she was a broken-hearted woman and cast off by her son" (p. 307). Clym bears the burden of this message, as he earlier bore the burden of her body: "I cannot help feeling that I did my best to kill her" he laments to Eustacia (p. 310).

In the novel, Hardy deals only partially with the mother-son and lover issue. Eustacia is not a moral agent equal to Mrs. Yeobright and, therefore, not a genuine threat to stealing Clym. The danger to Mrs. Yeobright is Clym's own desire to be free of her and satisfy his need for independent love. But Clym cannot free himself from her. Alone in his house after the wedding celebration of Thomasin and Venn, he realizes that his mother "was the sublime saint whose radiance even his tenderness for Eustacia could not obscure" (p. 404). Fatalistically, he senses that events have proven his mother right. His idealization of his mother finds ultimate confirmation in his sermon on King Solomon who acquiesces to his mother's requests without hesitation (p. 406). The novel ends with a devotion to motherhood that is at the same time an admission of its dominance.

In *Sons and Lovers* D.H. Lawrence more directly confronts the struggle between a mother, her son and his lovers, placing the attachment of the son to his mother in conflict with his desire for spiritual satisfaction and sexual fulfilment. Mrs. Morel in *Sons and Lovers* continues the dominant mother theme initiated by Trollope, although Lawrence stresses the sensuality and affection of the mother for her sons in a more overtly sexual manner as his 1912 letter to Edward Garnett made clear.¹⁹ Following the death of William in London,

Mrs. Morel dotes on Paul whose feminine/masculine presence satisfies psychological needs and latent, as well as repressed, sexual desires. Frequently, she tells him she has never had a proper husband, while he describes to her his ideal of a cottage for the two of them where she would be free of family demands and he could paint.

Courting one another as they visit Lincoln, Paul calls himself "a fellow taking his girl for an outing," although he blurts out in frustration "why can't a man have a *young* mother?"²⁰ When he recognizes the strength of his attachment to his mother ("She was the chief thing to him, the only supreme thing" [p. 261]), Paul is able to articulate her powerful hold over him. Complaining of his failure to give himself completely to another woman, his mother responds by saying he has not yet met the right woman. Knowingly, he answers as Clym did: "I never shall meet the right woman while you live" (p. 427). Their exchange demonstrates the "psychic impotence" of Paul, caused by his unresolved incestuous feelings encouraged by his mother.²¹

Miriam and Clara exhibit qualities Paul admires, but he finds both women unacceptable. With Miriam he suppresses his physical desires and in his struggle to control his feelings and actions, imagines shouting "I don't want another mother" at Miriam (p. 361). Clara is also a cause of anxiety through her need for a dependent male which Paul refuses to be. Shrewdly, she realizes his resistance, which becomes the cause of their separation, when she tells him "it's what men *won't* let you do. They won't let you get really near to them You can't come out of yourself, you can't" (p. 441).

The illness of Mrs. Morel and accelerated death (which reverses their roles: Paul is the adult, she the child), painfully separates him from her but does not release him. Ironically, it solidifies their bond. Revisiting his mother several hours after her death, she appears to him transformed into "a maiden asleep . . . , a girl asleep and dreaming of her love She was young again" (p. 485). Paul has achieved his wish of a young mother and he sanctifies their relation by passionately kissing her (p. 486). The last words Paul utters in the novel are "Mother! mother!" and they alone sustain him as he realizes that "he had loved her"; they two had, in fact, faced the world together" (pp. 510, 495).

Paul's association with his father undergoes no change after the death of his mother. It remains distant and detached, although it was earlier suffused with hate (pp. 79, 497). Previously, the father and his sons bitterly fought one another. William first attempted a fight with his father when he returned home to find his mother's eye swollen and

discolored; only the imploring cries of the mother prevented a battle (pp. 76-7). Paul comes closer to combat. Culminating the antagonisms between fathers and sons in the novel is the fight with his father in Chapter VIII. The son, displaying no fear of his father, is eager to destroy the figure he sees as preventing his happiness with his mother. Angered by his father's wasting food purchased for him, Paul prepares to strike. The father swings, although conscious of the danger of actually hitting his son. At the moment Paul is about to smash his fist against his father's jaw, Mrs. Morel faints and the fight stops (p. 263). Lawrence carefully structures the scene so that the violence is present but not destructive, with the center of the conflict the cause of the fight's termination. This unresolved battle between father and son marks the limits of physical conflict between parents and children in the early modern novel.

The naked portrayal of the eternal affection and involvement of Paul Morel and his mother indicates the extreme of the shift from fathers and sons as the basis of family conflict to mothers and sons, and, then, sons and lovers. In providing the fullest treatment of family conflict, Lawrence reveals the deeply felt, psychological drives that were previously diverted or disguised in fiction. In the shift from fathers and sons to sons and lovers, and the attendant freeing of the young man who then searches for a parental figure, the theme of homosexuality begins to emerge as E.M. Forster's *Maurice* and Lawrence's *Women in Love* suggest.

After 1918 as Martin Green has shown, young men did not want "to grow up to be men—that is, they did not want to be fathers—husbands—masters."²² With the first World War came public disillusionment with the ideals of maturity. The new images were of rogues, dandies or naifs, epitomized by T.E. Lawrence, Max Beerbohm, Ronald Firbank. In the novel a series of male heroes began a search for fathers that was characteristically unsuccessful.

The opening sentence of *Anna Karenina*—"All happy families resemble one another, but each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way"—is not only a maxim of domestic relations but a pronouncement of a continuing fascination with a theme more bitterly echoed by Joyce: "a man's worst enemies shall be those of his house and family." *Playboy of the Western World*, *Absalom*, *Absalom* and *Death of a Salesman* are only three modern works that elaborate this theme. But Joyce also posed a puzzling alternative when he said "paternity may be a legal fiction: Who is the father of any son that any son should love him or he any son?"²³ Contemporary literature is still asking that question.

NOTES

1. James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1973), I, 265. Johnson added that "there is a general relaxation of reverence. No son now depends upon his father, as in former times. Paternity used to be considered as of itself a great thing, which had a right to many claims. That is, in general, reduced to very small bounds. My hope is, that as anarchy produces tyranny, this extreme relaxation will produce *freni strictio*." II. 189.
2. Charles Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*, ed. Gordon Spence (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973), p. 174. For a Victorian representation of the fight between Oedipus and Laius see Chapter 17 of the novel where Barnaby grapples with his father. James Anthony Froude in Waldo Hilary Dunn, *James Anthony Froude, A Biography, 1818-1856* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), I, 17.
3. Edmund Gosse, *Father and Son* (London: Heinemann, 1930), p. 1. On the prodigal son motif see John R. Reed, *Victorian Conventions* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1975), pp. 239-49. On fathers see Howard R. Wolf, "British Fathers and Sons, 1773-1913: From Filial Submissiveness to Creativity," *The Psychoanalytic Review*, 52:2 (Summer, 1965), 53-70.
4. Samuel Butler, *Ernest Pontifex or The Way of All Flesh*, ed. Daniel F. Howard (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1964), p. 144. All further references are to this edition; Sigmund Freud, "Totem and Taboo," *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, tr. & ed. A.A. Brill (New York: Random House, 1938), p. 916.
5. George Meredith, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1967), p. 424. All further references are to this edition. The subtitle of the novel is *A History of Father and Son*.
6. John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, ed. Jack Stillinger (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), p. 4. All further references are to this edition. In Chapter II Mill admits that while he may have lacked the tender love his brothers and sisters had for his father, he nonetheless "was always loyally devoted to him" (p. 32). For a general discussion of their relationship see Bruce Mazlish, *James and John Stuart Mill, Father and Son in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1975).
7. Mill, "Early Draft", *Autobiography*, p. 33.
8. Butler, *Ernest Pontifex or The Way of All Flesh*, p. 21.
9. Froude was whipped and dipped with regularity in his youth. In his autobiography he writes that whipping was "the prompt consequence of naughtiness. My earliest recollection is of being whipped for having dirtied my frock. This was before the matutinal trough baptisms [daily immersions in ice cold water] when I was little more than two." Dunn, *Froude*, p. 17.
10. Ernest tells Overton "I want to put the children where they will be well and happy, and where they will not be betrayed into the misery of false expectations"; later, he remarks that the "question of the day now is marriage and the family system" (pp. 305-6, 337).
11. Samuel Butler, *The Notebooks of Samuel Butler*, ed. Henry Festing Jones and A.T. Bartholomew, Vol. 20, *The Shrewsbury Edition of the Works of Samuel Butler* (1926; New York: AMS Press, 1968), pp. 373, 25, 24-25. For a useful survey of Butler's statements on his father see "Father and Son," *Butleriana* (London: The Nonesuch Press, 1932), pp. 25-33.
12. Mill, "Early Draft," *Autobiography*, p. 33. He adds that such a figure would have altered his father's character and "made the children grow up loving and being loved. But my mother with the very best intentions, only knew how to pass her life in drudging for them." p. 33. Cf. Ruskin, *Praeterita* and Edmund Gosse, *Father and Son*.
13. Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1956), p. 505; Freud, *General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, p. 339. For an account of the shock caused by the breakdown of a father's authority see Edmund Gosse, *Father and Son*, Ch. II, pp. 33-35.
14. W.E.H. Lecky, *History of European Morals* in Eugene A. Hecker, *A Short History of Womens' Rights*, 2nd ed (New York: Putnam 1914), p. 252; John Ruskin "Of Queens' Gardens," *Works of John Ruskin*, ed. E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London: George Allen, 1905) 18:68, 121-22; Mill, "Early Draft," *Autobiography*, p. 33.

15. Vern L. Bullough writes, in *The Subordinate Sex. A History of Attitudes Toward Women*, "denied liberty they [women] sought power, and not infrequently the easiest way to gain power was over their children. Motherhood came to be elevated into a kind of mystique . . ." (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), p. 289. Freud records the change in the status of women within the family in a letter of 1883 addressed to his fiance's sister about his future mother-in-law: "there is no denying that she is taking a line against us all, like an old man. [She] . . . expects to be the centre, the ruler, an end in herself. Every man who has grown old honorably wants the same, only in a woman one is not used to it. As a mother she ought to be content to know that her three children are fairly happy, and she ought to sacrifice her wishes to their needs. This she doesn't do . . ." *Letters of Sigmund Freud, 1873-1939*, ed. Ernest L. Freud, tr. Tania and James Stern (London: Hogarth Press, 1970), p. 53.
16. Anthony Trollope, *The Way We Live Now* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), I, 163. All further references are to this edition. Minor novelists in the 1830's and 1840's popularized the mother as a marriage broker in a variety of works, most notably *Mothers and Daughters* (1831) and *Mrs. Armytage; or, Female Domination* (1836) by Mrs. Catherine Gore and *The Manoeuvring Mother* (1842) by Lady Charlotte Bury. For an account of this development see Vineta Colby, *Yesterday's Woman. Domestic Realism in the English Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), pp. 74-82.
17. George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 465. All further references are to this edition.
18. Thomas Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, ed. John Paterson, The Standard Edition, (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 210. My italics. All further references are to this edition.
19. On 14 November 1912, shortly after the manuscript of *Paul Morel* (the original title) was mailed to Duckworth, Lawrence wrote "as her sons grow up she selects them as lovers—first the eldest, then the second. These sons are urged into life by their reciprocal love of their mother—urged on and on. But when they come to manhood, they can't love, because their mother is the strongest power in their lives and holds them . . ." *Selected Letters of D.H. Lawrence*, ed. Diana Trilling (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1961), pp. 39-40.
20. D.H. Lawrence, *Sons and Lovers* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976), pp. 294, 296. All further references are to this edition.
21. Sigmund Freud, "The Most Prevalent Form of Degradation in Erotic Life," *Collected Papers of Sigmund Freud* (1912; New York: Basic Books, 1959), IV, 203-216.
22. Martin Green, *Children of the Sun*, p. 42. Cf. G.M. Young who remarks of the late Victorian age that "compared with their fathers, the men of that time were ceasing to be a ruling or a reasoning stock." *Victorian England, Portrait of an Age* (1936; New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 187.
23. Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, tr. Aylmer Maude, ed. George Gibian (New York: Norton, 1970), p. 1; James Joyce, *Ulysses* (New York: Random House, 1961), pp. 206-7. In *Misalliance* (1910) George Bernard Shaw proposed a more comical solution: "Parents and children! No man should know his own child. No child should know its own father. Let the family be rooted out of civilization! Let the human race be brought up in institutions!" *Collected Works of Bernard Shaw*, Ayot St. Lawrence Edition (New York: Wm. H. Wise, 1930), XIII, 199.