

# Sons and lovers in terms of modernism



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The new literary discovery of the XX was the modernist movement.

Modernism is the art of a dehumanized era, the attitude towards humanistic values in modernism is unclear, but the modernists world appears to be gloomy and depressing. Modernists conceive human existence as a brief fragile moment; the subject may or may not be aware of the tragedy, and the frailty of our absurd world. The author's duty is to recreate the day to day horrors of existence while at the same time express the beautiful moments that life provides us with. One of the greatest modern authors was David Lawrence and his novels provided that horrific, existential sub tone that often was disliked by his readers.

The novel, *Sons and Lovers* (1913) is the first serious work by David Herbert Lawrence, which brought worldwide recognition to the young writer, and in which the critic saw signs of artistic innovation. This book became a kind of stage in the creative development of the author. This is his third novel, completed before the war, when his concept of man and art had not yet crystallized. This is a book of farewell to youth, a book of searching for his own way in life and in literature, and, at the same time, it is a novel that provided Lawrence with the fame of a master of words. It is important that in this work both the traditions of the English novel of the XIX century and the innovative discoveries of literature of the twentieth century are synthesized and manifested at almost all levels of the work. *Sons and Lovers*, one of the best novels in world literature, is about the problems of family relationships and intimate relationships between a man and a woman. The main idea that the author tries to convey to the reader is the need for harmony of human contacts, in the balance of physical and spiritual forces in human life.

Lawrence regards the spiritual and physical union of a man and a woman as the only way to realize happiness. True love, according to Lawrence, consists in recognizing the individuality of another person and the sacred respect for them. Every individual is a separate being with a unique soul. You can destroy the individuality of that dear person by trying to change him/her in your own way. The novel's main conflict is based on the position of the mother, Mrs. Morel, who, due to her own high education, unaware of the natural spiritual "polarity" and relative independence of another person, destroyed the individual integrity of her husband. With good intentions, she intensely tried to attract the illiterate miner to serious reading, consistently instilled in him an increased sense of Christianity, and thereby upset his sensitive emotional nature, causing his dissatisfaction with life and involuntarily provoked his craving for drinking. Without realizing her own guilt for the fate of her husband, Mrs. Morel transfers all of her power of unused motherly passion to her younger sons in the hope that they will turn out to be a more fertile material for her "creative" efforts.

The novel is overall written in the modernistic style; however, it also has a line of traditional style in it also. The main topic of the novel is the tough love relationships between four main characters, which are: Paul Morel, his mother Mrs. Morel, Miriam, and Clara. Paul is a typical modern character who is stuck in a love square and cannot quite realize his true intentions to any of the women. The shadow image of the mother leaves a gloomy imprint on the relationship of youthful friendship and love of Paul and Miriam. Paul's need for a contemporary friend is more than the natural desire of a young man to have a beloved girlfriend. Only Miriam understands him "like no one," he

can talk with her “ about everything in the world,” they read and discussed the “ whole library” with her, he learned about all the neighborhoods with her ..., but the attraction to Miriam for Paul is an unaccountable attempt to get rid of his excessive attachment to the mother and her constant care, inhibiting the formation of Paul’s independence. However, with all the desire, Paul cannot give Miriam all his love, he is forced to divide himself between adult and young women, and this circumstance becomes the underlying cause of the impending gap between young people. Paul cannot quite see himself with Miriam. He wants to make himself love her, but the disapproval of his mother and his own doubts push him away from Miriam. This allows Paul to get closer to another woman named Clara that worked with him. This transition almost symbolizes the shift in overall literary world of XIX century. From the traditional values, which were upheld by wholesome, and true loving Miriam, to modernistic values in the face of Clara. Clara is a personality that can be called a modern woman. She lives the way she wants to. When she met Paul and got close to him, she was still a married woman. The marriage is a traditional symbol. Clara upheld the traditional values when she got introduced to the reader. However, just like the novel transitions from traditional style to modernistic, Clara enters into a prohibited relationship with Paul. She desired the change in her life, and this unlawful, physical romance excited her, just as much as it excited Paul and the reader.

Another symbolical transition from traditional to modernism could be the relationships between Mr. Morel, and Mrs. Morel, and her sons. Love is the force that united the traditional families together. It is the glue of a healthy

family. Morel's family lacked that pulling force between each other. Mrs. Morel could hardly stand her previously beloved husband. She chose him, because he was different, he was not like her father, and that factor alone attracted her to Mr. Morel. However, Morel was just a simple miner, and she desperately tried to change him, which made him become a drunk. Mrs. Morel would spend a lot of time with her sons, first William, and when he got older and moved, she would spend time with Paul. Paul's close relationship with his mother made him copy her feelings towards his father. With that, the traditional values had crumbled. The Morel family stopped being traditional, and, in fact, became "modern". The father figure was completely washed out. Mr. Morel became isolated in his own house. He grew cold to every member of his family, because they were cold to him as well. Lawrence destroyed the traditional picture of the father figure; of a respected man, who is loved by his family. The novel shows the different picture of reality. The father is a drinker, and a stubborn man who does not want to change for the good of the family. By the end of the novel, Mr. Morel does not even act surprised or sad about the death of his wife, the person that should be the closest to him in a traditional family. He separated himself from everybody, and nothing bothered him anymore. He became a sort of nihilistic character. Paul had a very similar ending. He separated himself from everybody, from his mother, from Miriam who loved him despite his personal problems, and from Clara who used him for her physical needs. Paul no longer belonged to anyone. Isolated from everyone he proceeded to the city.

Lawrence shattered the true values of traditional love. The love “square” that Paul created could be interpreted as the end of his personality. The close relationship with his mother, and absence of a father figure in his life lead to his undeveloped sense of what is right and what is wrong. Paul wanted everything and everyone but did not offer anything in exchange. Unfortunately for Paul, the novel *Sons and Lovers* is not a fairy tale story. The harsh realism of the novel shows that it is impossible to sit on two chairs simultaneously, a man has to choose what he desires the most and pursue that.

Lawrence made *Sons and Lovers* in some way biographical in order to show that reality is not the way it seems in books. Lawrence is as close as possible to his heroes, he looks at the world through their eyes, the author’s narration incorporates their inner monologues. The consciousness of Paul is the author’s “alter ego,” on equal terms with other consciousnesses: Mrs. Morel, Miriam, Klara. The reader is presented with different attitudes: male and female, youthful and mature, and this gives the novel the necessary bulk, fullness, aesthetic completeness. Lawrence combines in his work the phenomenon of the vision and recreation of the real world with philosophical symbols. Such narrative is especially important for the novel, where the plot is not connected with the action, but with the depth of character.

Reference:

- Lawrence, D. H. *Sons and Lovers* . B. W. Huebsch Publishers, 1913.