

Sons and Lovers: An Ecofeminist Study

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Abstract: D. H. Lawrence is one of the most divisive authors of the 20th century and a major influence on English literature. By depicting nature, women's resistance to and fight with their fates, and the decline of men, this study primarily analyses *Sons and Lovers* from an ecofeminist standpoint. The oppression of patriarchy and the rise of feminism gradually changes men's perceptions of patriarchy. It also condemns the severe impact that industrial civilization has had on nature and human society, therefore it promotes anti-industrialization and works to rebuild a peaceful society. Ultimately, it emphasises the original impulse, promotes the free evolution of humanity, and calls for peaceful coexistence between humans and nature as well as between humans and society.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, Feminism, Nature, Women, Environment.

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David Herbert Lawrence is regarded as one of the greatest English novelists of the 20th century. Lawrence, the fourth child of Arthur John Lawrence, was born into a mining family. Evidently, his father was usually inebriated and of sufficient means. In addition, he had a strained relationship with his wife, a former teacher of students. She was forced to work at a lace industry because of their poverty. He felt that instead of his father, his mother deserved a better man. As a result, his early life had a significant impact on his creative output. *Sons and Lovers* was actually a semi-autobiographical book. It was written during his mother's illness, therefore he gave it a special maternal affection to make it meaningful. It presented the tale of Paul Morel, the main character, and his mother Mrs. Morel, with whom he had a close and deep relationship. The three female characters Mrs. Morel, Miriam, and Clara in *Sons and Lovers* all represented the effects of ecofeminism. In *Sons and Lovers*, ecofeminism has generally been a prominent research focus lately. The merger of the environmental movement and the women's liberation movement is known as ecofeminism. Natural and gender dominance are linked by ecofeminism, which also emphasises that patriarchy is the root cause of this dominance. Cheryl Glotfelty in her essay "Introduction: Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis" analyses Ecocriticism by comparing it to Elaine Showalter's model on the stages of feminist criticism. Glotfelty points out how the first stage of feminism deals with women's representation in canonical texts. According to her,

These studies contribute to the vital process of consciousness raising by exposing sexist stereotypes-witches, bitches, broads, and spinsters-and by locating absences, questioning the purported universality and even the aesthetic value of literature that distorts or, ignores altogether the experience of half of the human race (22-23).

She then compares it to the ways in which Ecocriticism looks at the misrepresentation of environmental elements in literature. It enables her to form a connection between both approaches. This interconnection between women and the environment is also what Ecofeminism tries to study, and the literary texts discussed can be scrutinized through it.

The idea of patriarchy first emerged in sociology and anthropology. The family arrangement in which men have held the reins of power over all of the family's members is known as patriarchy. According to this argument, patriarchy is now regarded as the cause of women's and nature's subjugation. As we can see from *Sons and Lovers*, there were pits all throughout the countryside, some of which had developed into odd mounds and little dark spots before being contaminated and forming the setting for the village of Bestwood. Unexpectedly, ash pits were present in the houses where miners resided despite their appearance of being quite nice and stable. In addition to bringing about nature's passive position, it also reduced women's power. Males and ladies were not treated equally in many respects. According to Mrs. Morel's interpretation of this book, she didn't want a third child because of the hopelessness of life. She hated her husband and used to be alone, but she was unable to survive without him. She struggled with this life of abject poverty at times. Since Mr. Morel held all positions of authority historically, his inebriation and inaction revealed that Mrs. Morel was used to her husband's oppression. It was pretty obvious that they had unconsciously accepted the phenomenon. In a society where men

predominated, men had all the power in the realms of politics, the economy, law, religion, education, and the military. The gender gap was the biggest source of inequity in human society. The invisible hand of male authority was used to disadvantage and subordinate Mrs. Morel and the village.

It has a strong intrinsic worth and its unique appeal from the standpoint of nature. Long ago, there were woody hills and mountains, as well as a rich forest and a special geological structure. But, in patriarchal societies, nature was tamed and compliant. In this book, coal mines were a wanton purchase because they were a non-renewable resource. We discovered that Paul's working conditions were appalling and that Mr. Morel had to continue working in small mines since he was a miner. People had to dwell in the kitchens, which opened into the filthy alley of ash-pits, making the Bottoms' actual living circumstances, despite its well-built appearance, rather unpleasant. And every community was in disarray, with identical trenches dug into the ground like ants. These several black mines thus contributed to the formation of the community of Bestwood. To be completely honest, the discrepancy in environments had revealed the variations in patriarchy.

Mankind's natural environment had turned into a target for theft, conquest, and destruction. The working conditions in Paul's first industrial job were appalling. The ground floor was constantly dark, and the second floor was also very gloomy. All of the lights were downward-directed. That serves as evidence that Paul's workplace was unlit, unhygienic, and severely damaged, creating a dichotomous conflict between civilization and nature. He had to return often to this uncomfortable location devoid of fresh air. As a result, in the face of nature, humans were acting on the natural world and accumulating material wealth for themselves on a scale and at a rate that had never been seen before. Humans have felt the bitter fruits of human centralism when they are satisfied with their accomplishments. At the same time, through the heedless pursuit of material gain, humanity has turned into a slave to industrial society.

We frequently associate the word patriarchy with male dominance. In society, men typically hold a dominant position and absolute power. Instead of individual sexism, institutionalised control is the association of patriarchy. To emphasise how inferior women are in patriarchal societies, women are viewed as domestic characters while men play outside roles. In reality, women face prejudice and oppression and are not given many rights. Girls are treated like a man's servant. Male dominance exists everywhere, whether in the east or the west. Male chauvinism's fundamental characteristic is the personal suppression of interpersonal bonds. In *Sons and Lovers*, Mr. Morel, Paul's father, marries a middle-class woman with a good education, despite the fact that they come from different backgrounds and have different ideals. Despite this, they fell in love right away despite their differences. Mrs. Morel was forced to give him up, especially after marriage. From this vantage point, it was clear that patriarchy favoured dads who had complete control over the affairs of the family. No matter how driven and competent they are, women are typically restricted to domestic work and are not permitted to work outside. Although though Mrs. Morel had a good background and would have been able to live a better life with another man, she ultimately picked Mr. Morel and became Mrs. Morel. Despite this, she was unable to get a divorce and preferred to remain at home as a housewife. In addition, men dominated both nature and women in various ways. They were the head of the family in man's eyes, and they made all the decisions. For instance, Mr. Morel thought that the house was his not their collective one. He just said with a word of "mine." (Lawrence 65). In other words, most men believed that because they made more money than women, they had the right to mistreat and reprimand their wives and kids. Throughout the patriarchal era, women took seriously their responsibility to conceive and raise children. Girls should completely obey the man. Miriam, the second female character, also dealt with a similar situation. Miriam initially resisted Paul because she felt like she was being pursued and that her brothers had a habit of setting her at naught. Finally, and most importantly, Mary continued to wish to wed Paul despite his refusal to accept her. Paul believed Clara to be a married woman who would not be suitable for him. In actuality, there was overt gender discrimination and dominance.

The novel takes place in London just before the First World War. Industrial capitalism under capitalism was a double-edged sword that gave people material fulfilment while also having unfavourable impacts. The entire social scene and attitude were negative. The merciless capitalist exploitation of workers was a result of the capitalist industrial civilisation. *Sons and Lovers* by Lawrence exposed readers to a harsh world. Lawrence gave his perspective on the people's misplaced spiritual ecology in addition to describing the imbalance in the natural ecology in the book. Lawrence explicitly demonstrated to the reader how capitalism and modern civilisation contribute to environmental harm. Because of the unpleasant and filthy working circumstances, miners grew nasty and preferred to drink alcohol to unwind and forget about the hardships they were currently facing. Families are where people begin and end their lives, but in this novel, Mrs. Morel's family appears to be a jail that confines her throughout her entire existence. Mrs. Morel found it difficult to believe that her favourite little boy had killed her with his own hands. It is not at all illogical to claim that this situation represents a complete unbalance of humanity. In the meantime, men tended to be losing their positions and losing certain beliefs over time. Correspondingly, females seemed to understand themselves better and not afraid of male like before, this time they got more confidence on dealing with affection.

It goes without saying that industrialization, which involves a significant reorganisation of an economy for the purpose of manufacturing, is the era of social and economic development that converts a human group

from an agrarian society into an industrial society. Nature is destroyed as a result of this type of social change, there is no denying it. The picturesque environment in *Sons and Lovers* had been ruined by the brutal and filthy coal mines, as had been portrayed. Moreover, donkeys were employed to transport these mines, and strange, dark areas were created as their dwellings. Disgust over the significant effects of environmental damage brought on by those who pursue wealth blindly. Even though a large fire destroyed "Hell Row," new mines were prepared to open, and new businesses intended to resume operations. The factory lifestyle also cut men off from the natural environment, which was their genuine connection to the life force, due to their forced confinement and long workdays. When the mines engulf the fields in dust and darkness, flowers, water, and other natural images are associated with sensuality and beauty. As a result, nature ruled at that time. Given Mr. Morel's unfortunate past, it is understandable in this novel that the lower classes do not benefit from industrialisation. Because of the importance of machines in industry, Mr. Morel put in a lot of effort but received little compensation. All of these contributed to the social imbalance. Others, like the pot man who described this community as "flamin and scrattlin" (109), depended on nature despite its severe destruction because they were part of it. Simply put, the unbalanced degradation of nature was a serious issue. But, a lot of the time, the characters in this book disregarded natural laws and interfered with natural processes, destroying the beauty and ecological balance of things like the air, the river, the forest, and so on. Ecological equilibrium and deforestation had been badly compromised. In other words, nature was seriously prepared to exact its own natural retaliation.

Women were marginalised and repressed in a manner similar to how nature was exploited. Nonetheless, these Victorian women were completely obedient. Marriage may be a terrible and heartbreaking experience. Their options were constrained. Despite being family members, their husbands made these sacrifices for them. Mrs. Morel's submission was clearly another representation, but it was also true. Even after Mr. Morel became inebriated and argued with her, she kept going home. Even worse, he called her "ussy" while ignoring the fact that she was a special wife who gave her all to the family and instead referred to her as such. They were unable to simply sit and converse in peace, and they owed a lot of money in addition to living in a house that did not belong to them. She just sat there, angry and bitter after learning the truth. Unable to divorce, she carried on with her dejected life. Yet, she felt lonely and knew him too well, which caused her trust in life to be challenged. In a patriarchal society, women had limited freedom to leave unhappy marriages. It was acceptable for women to care for their families, but it was unwise for them to divorce because they would be forced to rely only on their spouse and experience oppression. Even worse, women's economic position was low. Aside from that, women were compelled to remain mute regarding their rights due to ancient norms and moral standards. Miriam was another patriarchal slave, similar to Mrs. Morel. She is only able to prepare housework and put up with abuse on a daily basis. In reality, Miriam was extremely wary of her surroundings. She did her best to take care of the cleaning at home since she wanted to be respected. We all know that losing oneself because of excessive love for someone was the most terrible experience. But these helpless women were forced to remain in their predicament. Even worse, Miriam was saddened and dismayed by Paul's callous treatment of her religious convictions. When Paul once declared their love was simply friendship, Miriam was shocked and hurt. She was severely harmed, yet she continued to wait for Paul's return. It was rumoured that Paul would occasionally step with women in *Sons and Lovers*. In conclusion, one's destiny is not something that one must wait for; rather, one must work towards it. It is not something that depends on chance.

To sum up, it may be claimed that Lawrence portrays the exploitation of both nature and women in *Sons and Lovers*. The task of restoring natural respect will be challenging given how deeply ingrained industrialisation is and has been over thousands of years. More and more people assert that they can manipulate nature as technology develops. Nature has unpredictable power. Humans may be affected when nature deviates from its natural course. In this book, nature can, in some ways, change things. For instance, the stunning nature outside really inspired Mrs. Morel to get up and continue her miserable life while she and Mr. Morel were arguing. The warped love between Paul and his mother developed naturally in this situation. You must have a respectful attitude towards nature. As we are a part of nature, we cannot survive without it. Humans become victims of the devastation of nature. Paul loved living on the Willey Farm and quickly became friends with the guys. Miriam's ability to stand up to love Paul once more in the face of the intense religious fervour was due to the power of nature. Spirit, flesh, and nature are seen by Lawrence as one cohesive entity. Furthermore, the nature exerts a dominant influence due to its superior strength, which governs our spirits and bodies and controls the occurrence and progression of everything. We may observe that when Paul and Clara felt a connection, the ominous landscape started to come to life and the leaves began to change into those of a wonderful beach. Every aspect of nature seemed lovely and lively, and love seemed to provide a magical energy. The situation was different, though, after the passing of his mother Mrs. Morel. The last painting Paul created was of his mother's death day, and he felt that everything had been destroyed. When the first snow fell, nothing was left, the street was deserted, and they held no significance for him. Nonetheless, they had the potential to spur his action. The only place he could put himself was the pitch-black night. We must work very hard to preserve and defend the earth, which is our home. So, it is our duty to revere and appreciate nature.

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