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*Corresponding author:

Mohammed Haqi Khaleel Alazzawi
University: Aliraqia University
College: College of Arts
Email: mohammed.alazzawi@aliraqia.edu.iq

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A R T I C L E I N F O

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The Turning Point of Woman from Victorian Stereotype into Liberal Model in Sons and lovers by D.H. Lawrence

A B S T R U C T

Via Sons and Lovers, D,H, Lawrence aims to bring about attitudinal and legislative changes that enable woman to achieve her rights. His work is a project that refuses the Victorian stereotype of woman—the housewife. It is a paradigm shift in social freedom of woman, that helps her free herself from dominant sociocultural patterns. His project draws its power from his daring female characters. Actually they are functioned to agitate the woman movement of liberation at Lawrence's time.

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نقطة تحول المراءة من القالب النمطي الفيكتوري الى النموذج الليبرالي في رواية " ابناء وعشاق" للكاتب دي اتش لورنس

م.د. محمد حقي خليل العزاوي /قسم اللغة الانكليزية /كلية الاداب/الجامعة العراقية

الخلاصة:

في روايته" ابناء وعشاق، يهدف الكاتب الانكليزي دي اتش لورنس(D.H.Lawrence) الى اجراء تغيرات ادائية وتشريعية لتمكين المرأة في تحقيق اهدافها. فهو يتبنى مشروعا يرفض القالب النمطي الفيكتوري للمراءة—وهو الزوجة. مشروعا يمثل نقلة نوعية في مجال الحرية الاجتماعية للمرأة والذي من شانه يساعدها في التخلص من القيود الاجتماعية والثقافية السائدة في تلك الفترة. يكتسب مشروع لورنس قوته من جراء شخصياته النسائية. فقد تم توظيفهن بالطريقة التي تؤجج الحركة النسوية البريطانية في ذلك الوقت للمطالبة بحقوقهن.

الكلمات المفتاحية :الحرية ، الفيكتوري، ليبرالي، النسوية، الزواج، المجتمع الذكوري

1-Introduction

Sons and Lovers , written by D. H. Lawrence, has been one of the world's most controversial novels . Though initially criticized by incitement of brothels and prostitution , it is today considered a masterpiece by many critics and often considered Lawrence's remarkable achievement, ranked among the top 100 literary works of all time. Critics, at that time, were interested in studying the text with keeping focus only on the idea of women seduction , disregarding that the novel was written at a historical moment when women's movements were seriously seeking for work, education and even suffrage. Within eighteen months of the novel's publication ,Britain was at war and women were seeking entry into the field of work to support the war effort: Gender politics were permanently influenced by Laurence's *Sons and Lovers.*

Sons and Lovers reveals the right perception of women's freedom. Lawrence presents three models of women: Mrs. Morel, Miriam, and Clara . They are all functioned to exercise their various freedoms and rights within the framework of morals , religion or even rebelling against societal notions, choosing a husband, practicing work, achieving their goals and ambitions, and defending their rights are all within the framework of the freedoms that women deserve. However, the perception may vary according to each character's awareness or social background.

The first section examines a thorough literary analysis how the Victorian stereotype of woman was. The marriage is only the suitable sphere where the woman lives. In the Victorian era, women didn't have many rights. This lead so many critics , like Millett (1970), Newman (1996), and Thaden, (2001) to believe that the woman at Victorian age was treated as a slave by her own community. Moreover, there was an idea of what is so called *separate sphere* , say Hughes (2015), Elizabeth Lee (2000), was dominated at that time . Actually, women were thought to be limited to housewives and child-bearing mothers. They were only considered to be people who needed to worry about managing a successful household during this time. Mrs. Morel, one of the main characters, embodies well this type of woman who is puritan rooted, a strong and tender woman who is attracted to an inferior man and marries him, but she does not find with him the satisfaction she is looking for. However, She is an ideal woman, the wife as well as the mother, who devotes her life to support her family a peaceful life as much as possible, yet her fate is to marry a codependent , irresponsible, and indifferent man called Mr. Morel. We , then, find her to practice her role as an ideal mother whose life is for her sons. She is the woman who looks for

seeing her sons educated and occupying a highly-esteemed status in the society. Throughout this character, Lawrence tries to portrait the Victorian woman; the woman who is deprived from her rights to be as a slave in her house. He as if wants to say that the Victorian woman has nothing to do except marriage.

The second section demonstrates Lawrence's philosophy towards woman's freedom. It represents the woman's movement towards her liberation , with the same time it attempts to answer the hypothetical question of how Lawrence could achieve the turning point that transfer the woman into a better status. Thus, he has been praised by many critics, Cuddon (1998), for example, assumes that Lawrence's text has been used as a literary movement towards woman freedom. Supported by Storch (2015), Lawrence was able to participate in uplifting the woman's suffering. However, we can observe that Miriam the liberal model is , in fact, one of the most crucial characters who may represent his own idea of Intellectual liberation, to say that it is the main dynamic factor of changing woman's status for better. He argues that every woman, including Miriam, must free herself from all kinds intolerance and sterile ideas of society that do not support her self-development in her society, such as early marriage before gaining her material independence, which is, by no means, necessary to be free from the idea that her main function is to carry out household and having children. Women, according to Lawrence, are able to serve their country by participating in the political scene and civil society. Miriam, for instance, tries to engage with reading and make it a daily habit in order to expand her thinking to be as active as man in the society. Though both Miriam and Clara are looking forward the freedom, Clara's perception for it may differ from what Miriam believes. The first has the idea that freedom should be obtained regardless social values, while the later , Miriam , believes that the freedom should be done within moral and religious framework. However, Lawrence may warn his society that the woman should achieve freedom otherwise we may find them rebelling against society like Clara.

2-Victorian attitude of woman

Sons and Lovers ,by D. H. Lawrence , reveals the real image of woman in her society. It tells the reader how the Victorian society's attitude toward women was; which has become the subject of suspicion and derision during this time. However, women of Lawrence's novel persevered and eventually established a stronger position in society. Though they were trapped in an unfavorable

hierarchical structure, Lawrence's heroines fought the social obstructions and cultural obstacles to gain their rights.

However, throughout closer look at the status of Western women in the Victorian society, we will not find much difference between them and that status of Eastern women in the end of nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Laurence's *Sons and Lovers* refutes the widespread alleged perception of European women who had all their rights or at least fared much better than their counterparts in the Eastern world.

The woman, at that time , was just a commodity found to meet the Victorian man's demand. In her book *Sexual Politics,* Kate Millett (1970) is interested in uncovering the implicit text of the novel that refers to the supremacy of the masculine . She views Paul, one of the main characters, as a superstructure who uses women in his life to support and strengthen his ego and satisfy his sexual needs, then get rid of them as soon as he satisfies his inclinations and fulfills the role assigned to them. Paul believes that " recklessness is almost a man's revenge on a woman. He feels he is not valued, so he will risk destroying himself to deprive her altogether" (S & L p: 293). In fact Millett's reading of the novel introduces us in a disciplined and accurate way to the situation we took on women in British society in the early twentieth century; it is the society which has often effected by Victorian era.

The Victorian era, which lasted from the nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries and was named after Queen Victoria (1837-1901), was a period that spread across the entire European continent and witnessed a strong commitment to women. At the time, Britain was governed by a general law that deprives women of all their rights. According to Newman (1996), the Victorians believed that men and women should be in "separate spheres" of domesticity and paid work, each with its own obligations. The home should be the proper domain of women. A woman should perform her "proper duties" within her "proper sphere," which include "dedicating herself to the repetitive tasks of domestic labor and to minister to others' needs" (p.6).Moreover, Elizabeth Lee (2000) points out that because of the separate spheres principle, there were two human natures that corresponded to the masculine and the feminine in Victorian Theories of Sex and Sexuality. According to the feminine and masculine natures or temperaments, there was an anabolic nature that nurtured energy and a katabolic nature that released energy. These two terms are scientific terms that are used in biology and biochemistry. Catabolism is the breakdown or disintegration of

something, whereas anabolism is the building up or synthesis. Women are depicted as builders in this imagery and metaphor, whereas Victorian men are depicted as destroyers.

As we've already mentioned, one stereotype of women was that they were virtuous and devout. Gertrude met a miner at a Christmas to fall in love then married him. Yet her husband's mistreatment and the hardships of poverty shocked her and ended her sexual attraction to him. So she passed on her affection to, particularly William. The boy clings to her and pays her for the violence of his father, who spent his own money on alcohol rather than devoting to his wife and four children instead . On the other hand,Miriam and Paul, for instance, "although they share a deep emotional bond, Miriam won't give herself fully to Paul, which makes him feel embarrassed of his sexual desires.", She lay as if she had given herself up to sacrifice" (S&L p:443)

So the major role of Victorian women is marriage, therefore they were being prepared to become experienced housewives, who have to learn cooking, cleaning and sewing skills, in order to take charge of the marital home. Therefore we can find that " The children, alone with the mother, told her all about the day's happenings, everything […] But as soon as the father came in, everything stopped" (S& L : P: 98)" . In the contrary, the wealthy women are excluded from learning these skills, because they have maids who do so instead, yet they concerned themselves with looking after both their husbands and their jobs. Both are prohibited from leaving the house to work or pursue education or knowledge outside of the home. However, poor women could only work as housemaids. (Thaden, 2001, p.66).

Within Victorian age, the woman's domain is home only where it is considered the best place for her, while the outer world is a place for men, where women must not be present. This results in a societal belief that woman is inferior to men in all respects, and she is viewed as weaker beings, who does not possess the elements of physical strength that man possesses, and therefore, she could not exist in the public sphere.

> "He liked to watch his fellow-clerks at work, the man was the work and the work was the man, one thing, for the time being. It was different with the girls. The real woman never seemed to be there at the task, but as if left out, waiting." (S.& L. p: 174)

Victorian society is vey patriarchal . Woman is not allowed to obtain the privileges of men. Furthermore, the right woman is classified in accordance with the gender norms that this era's values have established. One of these qualities that a woman needs to possess in order to get married is innocence; otherwise, she might have trouble finding a spouse.

Showalter, (1999) points out that the qualities that men in the Victorian era sought in the right woman who should have given the man this impression of innocence and naivete. The ideal woman should appear naive and have little knowledge of the outside world. The woman , to Showalter, should be “a perfect lady, an Angel in the House, contentedly submissive to men, but strong in her inner purity and religiosity, queen in her own realm of the Home” . She should look meek and weak and have little opinion. Furthermore, Ewbank, (1966) assumes that The Victorians believed that a pure feminine mind must possess certain knowledge as a domestic ideal. “no sin, no evil, no sexual passion”. As a result, these qualities determined their future or they would end up their life unmarried. In Victorian society the marriage is the only dream of girls who look forward to it like a window to the world that allows them to find a breadwinner who supports them . The marriage, to Victorian woman, is the only chance to survive (p:43).

In her article *Gender Roles in the 19th Century.* Kathryn Hughes (2015), assumes that the Victorian attitude lies on the idea of sex separation due to the human features of each; the woman, the weak creature, should acquire morality, then gifted home as the safe place. This would help her prepare the next generation that could contribute in the society. while the man strives to excel in the public sphere in order to achieve material benefits that help him play his role and in order to maintain the quality of masculinity (or manhood), particularly among his peers.

Hughes claims that although there were very few women who dedicated their lives to learning and enjoying the benefits of thought, they were actually viewed as unfeminine. As they were attempting to occupy the "natural" intellectual prowess of men and lacked — viewed by their society — the feminine attributes that made men want to marry them.

It was not surprisingly to find some doctors of this Victorian age even declared that the women, who high academic attainment , have a bad effect on the ovaries, which makes them lack the ability to have children. Consequently, when the universities of Oxford and Cambridge allowed women later this century, families refused to enroll their daughters since they would no longer be appropriate for marriage. However, women in Victorian society were not even allowed to express

their desire to find a husband, despite the fact that marriage was the only value they were permitted to aspire to.

The values of this society dictate that men should avoid speaking to women during gatherings and parties because doing so will signal sexual desire. Additionally, according to Victorian society, a woman's desire for marriage should be based on her desire for motherhood rather than her desire for sexual gratification. So Miriam thinks that she " ought to be married, she was engaged to be married.. [she] must be married to have children" (S & L p: 445). Since women were not allowed to work for themselves at the time, their only option for surviving was marriage. Women were not allowed to pursue any jobs that provided a guarantee of financial support under the laws of the time. As a result, their marriage became their sole means of support. A woman needed to maintain her virginity as well as her innocence and naivete, particularly when it came to matters of love and sex.

Virginia Woolf is probably the best one who can give us a vivid image of Victorian woman. With her few lines , we can know the true features of an ideal woman who lived in such a society that was almost described patriarchal. .

> "She was immensely charming. She was intensely sympathetic. She was utterly unselfish.
> She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily.
> If there was chicken, she took the leg; If there was a draught she sat in It –in short...she never had a mind or wish of her own... Above all – I need not say
> it – she was pure. " (Woolf,:2021 pp:163-171)

As was already mentioned, marriage was the majority of nineteenth-century women's ultimate life goal. Every woman is prepared from an early age for the role that will occupy her entire life: an obedient wife and a protective mother. It was preferred for a woman to have domestic abilities like cooking, sewing, and cleaning, but more importantly, she should have the virtues of innocence,

chastity, morality, and femininity. Additionally, because it was a man's world, "women were... not allowed to be educated or gain knowledge outside of the home" (Appell 2012).

3-Women's Rights Progress

Like other women of their age, Mrs. Morel, Miriam, and Clara had their rights violated, oppressed, and abused as a result of a strategy that included discriminatory laws. They are therefore Lawrence's tools for promoting the success of any feminist movement at the time. Lawrence was brave enough to uphold his duty to women despite receiving harsh criticism for his work.

Feminist criticism is viewed in this context as both a critical theory and a literary analysis movement. Its beginnings can be found in the fight for women's rights in the late nineteenth century (Cuddon, 1998). Feminism has long sought to upend the tenets of patriarchal culture in order to support the notion of gender equality. It developed into a significant factor in determining and forming, with a focus on social, political, and economic reform.

In the 1960s, when there were definite indications of fresh perspectives on women writers and literature, it discovered its approach to literature. This was evident in the work and writing of numerous feminists, such as Virginia Wolf, whose novels were examined from various feminist perspectives by feminist critics. So, like other feminists, she was concerned about how much worse off women were than men from an economic and cultural standpoint (Seldon 2005). In terms of political performance, Mitchell (2009) claims that women were not allowed to vote, possess property, or hold professional positions other than those as teachers, domestic helpers, workers, or agricultural laborers.

Women's liberation movements gained some notoriety during the Victorian era through the social reform movements of the nineteenth century, which grew until the middle of the twentieth century. For instance, John Stuart Mill (1867) examined the fundamental theories underlying women's place in Victorian society in his essay The Subjugation of Women. Stuart contends that the treatment of women, which kept them from having full freedom and equality, is in opposition to human progress.

The Victorian society was in the believe that women shouldn't be equal to men. Undoubtedly absurd and unacceptable to Victorians was the notion that women and men were equally valuable and that women's needs were the same as men's. This "subversive tendency" was exactly what the time period objected to. (Poovey, 1988, p.147).Their roles thus must be limited as caregivers for husband, children, and grandchildren even. of caring for the home and raising children. Work , education, and self-fulfillment were not recognized, and women who thought so were demonized as rude and viewed with suspicion by society. "She had borne so long this cruelty of belonging to him and not being claimed by him" (S & L. p:637). Therefore most of women in *Son and Lovers* wish to be men, then " nothing would stop [them]" (S &L. p: 14).

Education was commonly only available to men because society did not view formal education as being necessary for women.Women were therefore less likely to be employed in skilled positions requiring a higher or intermediate level of education.At the time, women were typically expected to be housewives or housekeepers.Women's traditional roles consisted of being a wife or mother who took care of her kids and maintained order in her husband's home.Miriam explains to Paul:

> " I want to do something. I want a chance like anybody else. Why should 1, because I'm a girl, be kept at home and not allowed to be anything? What chance HAVE I?' do anything? What chance doI have"
> (S.&L p: 238)

The plot represents deeply the shifting views towards the woman issues. The work mirrors Lawrence's response to the women's struggling . The novel is full of historical details: Ms. Morrell is a member of the Women's Union; Clara is a feminist who attends a meeting where Margaret Bondfield (1873-1953) gives a speech; she makes a reference to the Women's Political and Social Union; but the Women's Emancipation Advocacy Group was founded in 1903 by Emmeline Pankhurst; and here Lawrence reveals not only Paul's reaction to the battle for women's rights (he sees it as a whole with a kind of veiled playfulness) but also goes on to the reaction of women. The older generation (Mrs. Radford, Clara's mother, observing her daughter's positions in the political sphere as a feature of the immediate problems that follow marriage).

Contemporary feminine-oriented criticism has tried to understand the novel in its historical context. In her essay D.H. Lawrence and Femininity, Hilary Simpson (1982) asserts that the novel

is very sensitive to the economic underpinnings of women's oppression. While Margaret Storch (2015) looks at Lawrence's portrayal of women in the context of women's emancipation and the context of their historical situation where young people felt the dangers of feminine power and at the same time believed in the role of women played in controlling men's emotional lives. Clara feels a slave , and her marriage is like a jail , therefore; she wants to free herself to be " free and independent" (S. &L. p:357)

Probably Lawrence is much affected Charlotte Brontë, whose *Jane Eyre* is about a tale of a woman who resists the traditions of her time, It helps clarify the position of women in "Victorian England". The novel was classified as a work that shook the traditions of society at the time, as it was one of the first works to discuss the feminist point of view clearly, at a time when the rights of European women were limited, as were their roles in society.

The factory where Paul Morel works has a hierarchical structure that demonstrates the division of roles. Men hold administrative and managerial positions (95), while women work in machine shops (97-98). Morel and Clara Dawes' conversation exemplifies women's growing resentment of this inequity. Clara is asked if she enjoys her job and if it is difficult. "Doesn't all women's work? That's another trick the men have pulled since we forced ourselves into the labor market," Clara responds (S.&L. pp:227-228). As a result, despite social and economic advancements, women's presence in the workplace is menial, proletarian toil.

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The contrast between the characters of Mrs Morel, Clara Dawes, and Miriam Leivers demonstrates the transformation in women's public self-confidence. Mrs. Morel is promoted to "When she is ignored in a restaurant, she becomes "angry" because she believes "her orders [are] too meager,... [and] she [lacks] the courage to insist on her rights" . Her perception of her status as a working-class woman prevents her from asserting herself outside of her home and family. Nonetheless,

Clara Dawes, a suffragette, has the personal strength to "talk[] on platforms" a generation later . Dawes, as a member of the women's movement, "acquired a good deal of education and taught herself French." . Despite not being a member of any pressure groups, Leivers recognizes the disequilibrium of the"unjust" patriarchal society in which "the man does whatever he wants... [and] a woman forfeits". Furthermore, when discussing marriage with Paul, she demonstrates her resolve and growing independence by declaring, "we are too young... twenty-four and twenty-three [to be married]". Her declaration clearly demonstrates that by the end of the Victorian era, women felt more free to make their own decisions. (S & L. pp: 86-275)

Lawrence's book demonstrates how women's status has changed over time, from Mrs. Morel's unfulfilled marriage to Clara Dawes' decision to divorce her husband to Miriam Leivers' resolve to remain single. By the end of the nineteenth century, women had made significant progress. They had gained control over their property and earnings, founded women's colleges at the top universities, won the right to serve on town councils and school boards, were qualified to work as poor-law officers and factory inspectors, were allowed to vote in local elections if they owned property, and were even allowed to run for mayor. However, the male perspective of women did not start to change until the 20th century. Men gradually stopped "treating [women's] opinion as of no consequence" as women started to speak up in society.

Sons and Lovers by Lawrence is layered with themes beyond Oedipal and mother-daughter relationships. The setting, which contributes to the novel's realism, portrays the social climate of the final decades of the nineteenth century.

4-Conclusion

Since she is the crucial part in any society, woman, in broader sense, has been the focus by many intellectuals. Lawrence is among those who addresses this critical issue—the woman liberation. The study concludes that *Sons and Lovers* is the wide gate through which any reader can furnish himself with the true fact of woman in the beginning of twentieth century. Moreover , it explores Lawrence as one of the earliest feminists in the twentieth century. He could achieve successfully to make his work as a practical approach applied by modern woman to get her freedom.

Lawrence's ideology of woman liberation lies on the idea of intellectual freedom. The study has reached the satisfactory answer of its hypothetical question. Lawrence believes in the idea of education as a corner stone of woman's freedom. He suggests that in order to give the woman the social freedom, she must be educated first, then she gradually free herself from her patriarchal society. Ignorance, to Lawrence, is the first enemy of woman that keeps her position inferior to the man. Moreover, the freedom, according to Lawrence, needs courageous women to call for since without courage the slogan of freedom, can never be achieved. Besides his daring female characters, Lawrence's argument and style have acquired frankness, courage, and clarity to discuss such a perilous issue that nobody dared to deal at his time. So his Sons and Lovers becomes a corner stone towards the liberation of woman.

The study provides researchers with many suggestions with respect to the further analytical reading of *Sons and Lovers*. To begin with the text is not merely a romantic relationship rather than these relationships can be considered as a field where the woman can say, ask, demand, and face her opposite sex to get her dreams true. In addition, the centrist discourse is the Lawrence's craft to adopt. With this type of discourse, we can persuade others , though extremist. Moreover, the text, though it was published at the beginning of twentieth century, still has a Victorian influence in terms of culture. So, this Victorian background can not be ignored while reading or analyzing the text. Finally, Lawrence follows a perfect select style of his characters. His discrepancy and incompatibility of characters help him make a normative judgments about woman's rights. His characterization, into such degree, helps him make a harmonious plot that supports his issue.

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