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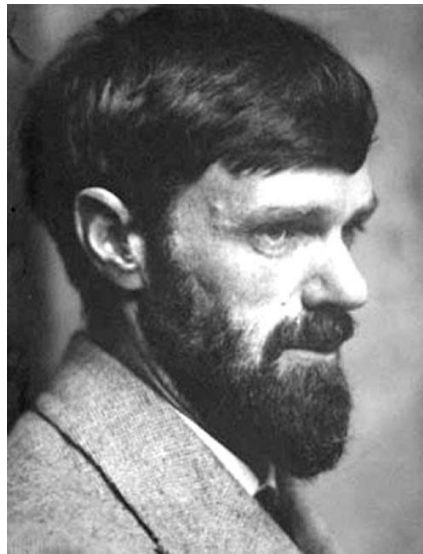
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Industrialization and the Disintegration of Family Relationship in David Herbert Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*

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Abstract

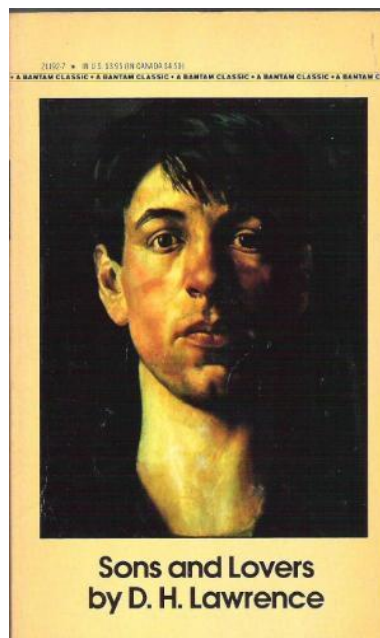
Industrialization has endowed the modern civilization with rapid and much progress but at the same time it has snatched away the vitality of life. As England is the home ground of industrialization, she suffers much the sweet agony of it.

David Herbert Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* is an authentic document of the English lower class life in the beginning of the twentieth century. In this novel the mining people, their mental attitude, modes of life, habits and the yells of their domestic joys and cares are depicted in an industrialized society.

Industrialization and its rigid moral codes enslave nature and evaporate the sensual and aesthetic needs of man. Factory life with its enforced confinement and long working hours isolate man from the natural world, the true source of life force. Modern industrial life perverts people. Under the impact of industrialism and rapid urbanization human mind loses its fertility, becomes barren as a desert. It profoundly affects the family life of the lower class working people who work in coal mines. With the process of industrialization and urbanization, extended families are breaking down and kinship is declining.

This paper aims at demonstrating how industrialization is becoming a tool in the disintegration of family bonds as depicted in David Herbert Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*.

Coal Miners



Sons and Lovers begins with the description of the residential area of the coal miners. All over the country side around the village of Bestwood there were gin-pits and gin-pits. Lawrence's disgust with industrialization is depicted in his descriptions of the mining pits that dot the countryside and the hardships and humiliation that working families had to endure to survive. The coal miners who worked in these pits lived in 'Hell Row'. Mining activities had been going on in these tiny mines in their crude and old fashioned way even from the regime of Charles II.

Emergence of Big Industrialists

But long before the close of the nineteenth century came the big industrialists. The coal and iron fields of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire were discovered. The gin-pits were elbowed aside by the large mines. New mines were implanted where Carston, Waite and Co., a big industrial group invested huge amount in the mining sector. The erstwhile British prime minister, Palmerston, inaugurated the company's first mine at Spinney Park, on the edge of Sherwood Forest. In this new set up, Carston, Waite and Co. built a new colony 'The Bottoms', on the site of 'Hell Row' to accommodate the regiments of miners.

Hell Row and The Bottoms

The name of the housing of the miners has symbolical significance. 'The Bottoms' refers to the bottom level of the human experience in the mean lives of the coal miners and their families and the 'Hell Row' indicates the awful impact of industrialization on civilization. All the pains and agonies of hell are available in the life of these people because of industrialization. 'Hell Row' was burnt down to give place to 'The Bottoms'. Though 'Hell Row' was burnt down and the dirt was cleansed away, the filth of industrialization has still there and it is such a stigma that is never to be erased.

Walter Morel and His Family

Mr. Walter Morel, a coal miner and the representative of the working class people in this novel, lives with his family in 'The Bottoms', one of the complexes built for the thriving coal mining business and linked by railroads running through Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.

For Gertrude Morel, the wife of Walter Morel, 'The Bottoms' is a kind of nightmare from which she cannot escape. Her refinement is in constant contrast to the crude lives of the miners. She despises the dreary and tedious life she leads as a poor miner's wife. For Gertrude, her marriage is a progress of disillusionment that eventually leads to despair. After the first six months of their marriage the true nature of Walter Morel begins to appear. He neither understands his wife nor gives her the companionship she longs for.

Since he is a coal miner, he is a captive of industrialism that makes him harsh and indifferent to family affairs.

Impact of Industrial Work

Before the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Morel, they met each other in a Christmas party. Gertrude asks Morel about his profession. Then he replied that he is a miner. Morel had been working in mine field since he was ten. The delicate children are engaged in brutal mining activities. Mr. Morel is seen brute throughout the whole novel. It is because of his hard toil from the very childhood in the mine field that vanishes his delicacy and makes him heartless. Later, it causes the breakdown of their conjugal life.

Mrs. Morel feels the inhuman atmosphere of the pit. She also inspects closely from her husband's life that indelicate miners are callous to their family life. So she does not want her children to be engaged in their father's profession. She persuades William, her elder son, to find a job in an office in stead of going to pits. At last he gets a job with decent salary in London. She expects her second son, Paul also to be in a job. Since Paul has fondness for art, he does not like any bondage. But in an industrial society he has no other choice to flourish. As a rising artist Paul Morel searches for identity and meaning in his life but he must find his answers from his background of the mining community, industrial England. So Lawrence labels him as "Already he was a prisoner of industrialism" (page 114).

Behavior that Denies God in Heart

Morel has 'denied God in him' and has a habit of drinking. When he receives his wages, so much of it goes for drinking. There is scarcely enough left for the necessities for his wife and family. This is the picture of the lower class people. They drink with their small income and it disturbs the peace of their family: "On Friday night, Saturday and Sunday, he spent royally, getting rid of his sovereign or thereabouts. And out of so much, he scarcely spared the children an extra penny, or bought them a pound of apples. It all went in drink" (page 26).

Walter and Gertrude – A Contrasting Picture

In many ways Walter Morel is opposite to his wife. Walter is from a lower class mining community but his wife has an aristocratic family background. He speaks the local dialect like the unsophisticated workers in contrast to his wife's refined English. He loves to drink and dance while Mrs. Morel is a rigid puritan. Morel fails to be a good husband, a good father and family breadwinner because he is a man broken by an uncaring, brutal industrial system. He also degrades himself through heavy drinking. So, there was a constant conflict between husband and wife: "There began a battle between the husband and wife, a fearful, bloody battle that ended only with the death of one" (Page 22).

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Mrs. Morel has almost no sympathy for her husband. She always tries to make her husband cultured and modest. But Morel is not a person to be modified easily. There are frequent quarrels between them. It is one of the main causes for the distortion of their family life. Both husband and wife are alien to their own house. They have no emotional attachment. For example, when once Walter Morel becomes seriously ill, his wife feels dreary:

When all her woman's pity was roused to its full extent, when she would have slaved herself to death to nurse him and to save him, when she would have taken the pain herself, if she could, somewhere far away inside her she felt indifferent to him and to his suffering. It hurt her most of all, this failure to love him, even when he roused her strong emotions (Page 111).

Effect on the Children

The children of Morel family are no less affected by the mechanical life gifted by industrialization. Arthur, the youngest son of the Morels, is also imprisoned by industrialization. He got a job in the electrical plant at Minton pit after finishing his apprenticeship but later joined in army. His emotional and physical ties to the whole family are the weakest of all the children. In the end, his levity and easy-going ways lead him to the marriage with Beatrice Wyld. After his marriage he is estranged from the family and lives separately with his wife.

Women Coming Out of Their Cocoons

In the industrialized England the women came out from their cocoons and engaged themselves in outdoor activities but separated themselves from their traditional role of a caretaker for husband, children and other family members. This job opportunity of women is recognized as reason of breaking the divine law of women's mission on this universe. As a result no peaceful relationship could happen as in the case of marriage in their family life.

Clara Dawes and Paul

We find the same thing happening in Clara Dawes' life. She represents the modern emancipated woman having the courage to walk out of an unhappy marriage with Baxter Dawes. She supports herself by working at Jordan's factory. Baxter also works at the same factory as the smith. Both of them are trapped in the cage of industrialization. So, their conjugal life does not last long and they are separated from one another. But at the

end of the novel Clara goes back to Sheffield with her husband and Paul is left alone with his father.

Paul is somehow lost without his mother. He can no longer paint, and he puts all of his energy into his work at the factory but his soul seems to be vacillating between light and darkness, between life and death. He thinks off suicide to join with his mother but ultimately leaves off thinking about suicide, and instead walks toward the 'city's gold phosphorescence' which refers to industrialization: "Turning sharply, he walked towards the city's gold phosphorescence. His fists were shut, his mouth set fast. He would not take that direction, to the darkness, to follow her. He walked towards the faintly humming, glowing town, quickly" (P 464). Apparently this is an optimistic ending but it symbolizes that now Paul has to survive in a world where he is devoid of any family tie.

Humans Losing Their Significance

In *Sons and Lovers*, human beings are less significant because they are introduced after six paragraphs. It is done only to highlight the overwhelming influence of industrialization on civilization. In this novel, Mr. Morel's family represents the lower class working people of the then England. The ominous impact of industrialization has intermingled with each sphere of their life.

We see that at the end of the novel Mrs. Morel dies of tumor. Symbolically, this tumor refers to industrialization. Industrialization is the tumor of human civilization. Tumor gradually weakens one and leads one to death.

Likewise industrialization gradually makes the working class people's life hell and takes away their life force. They never become happy. They work hard to make the industrialists rich and happy but in their life, contentment never comes. Industrialization absorbs all good things but leaves dust and darkness for them. They struggle for survival throughout their life.

Moving to Cities for Better Life

While Lawrence was criticizing industrialization and the loss of humanity's bond with the country life, rural people were rushing towards cities throughout the nineteenth century for a better life. The agricultural depression of the 1870s further depleted the number of farmers, and by the turn of the century more than 80 percent of Britain's population lived in cities. The "faintly humming, glowing town" toward which Paul walks at the end of the novel is full of telephones and buses, trams, automobiles, and subway trains- all are the specimen of industrialization.

Problems in Family Caused by Industrial Structure of Civilization

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Regarding the themes in *Sons and Lovers*, Edward Garnett comments on the ‘mining people, their mental outlook, ways of life and habits’ at the backdrop of a newly industrialized community:

Mr. Lawrence silenced...critics [of *The White Peacock* and *The Trespasser*] by his third novel, *Sons and Lovers*, an epic of family life in a colliery district, a piece of social history on a large canvas painted with a patient thoroughness and bold veracity. The central theme, an unhappy working-class marriage, a woman’s struggle to rear her children while sustained by her strong puritanical spirit, develops later into a study of her maternal aversion to surrendering her son to another woman’s arms. The theme is dissected in its innermost spiritual fibers with an unflinching and loving exactitude, while the family drama is seen against an impressive background of the harsh, driving realities of life in a colliery district” (Garnett 1922).

An unhappy working class marriage between Mr. and Mrs. Morel leads to many problems in their family. Walter and Gertrude could not get rid of their incompatibility that annihilated all the possibilities of their conjugal happiness. This inability vitiates the mental and psychological development of the children as well. They gradually learnt to hate their father and feel attracted to mother.

In his personal life Lawrence experienced the bitter relationship between his worker father and his sophisticated mother. He also noticed how the industrialization disturbed the peace of their family life. So, about the importance of a peaceful family life Lawrence himself comments: “No man can live unless his life is rooted in some woman: unless some woman believes in him, and so fixes his belief in himself. Otherwise he is like a water plant, whose root is detached: floating still, and apparently flourishing, upon the river of life, but really decaying slowly.” (P xlii)

Complete Disintegration of the Family

Eventually, we find that with the death of Gertrude Morel, the ill matched matrimonial union of the Morels ends in complete disintegration of the Morels’ family. The first Son, William died earlier; another son, Arthur leads a separate life with his wife and the only daughter of the family, Annie was married off. And now after the death of Mrs. Morel, Mr. Morel goes to one of his friends’ house for living and Paul becomes somewhat a vagabond, unable to choose a life partner which indicates his unwillingness to enter into new relationships further. They all are about to take the taste of essential loneliness of modern life. Industrialization has expedited the speed of human life towards modernity but simultaneously it has taken away the freshness and enormity of family bondage.

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