

## Class Struggles in *Sons and Lovers*

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This paper looks into the ideological discourse embedded in D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*. *Sons and Lovers* is an autobiographical novel which necessarily carries the author's own experiences. For this reason, it reflects the social and historical background upon which the narrative is displayed. *Sons and Lovers* is full of the historical characteristics of the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century England. This essay closely reads the class struggles of the time in *Sons and Lovers*. In most of Lawrence's novels, the class struggles appear in the form of the marriage of two people from different classes. In *Sons and Lovers*, the hegemonic conflicts between Walter Morel and Gertrude Morel clearly show the class struggles of the time. Also, this paper disentangles the complicated stories of William and Paul and shows the general tragedy of English young men of the time. In the end, it will show that *Sons and Lovers* is a fully loaded ideological discourse.

### I. INTRODUCTION

In an autobiographical novel, Roy Pascal argues, a writer may “alter and rearrange actual circumstance in order to find and tell the truth about himself and life” (150). An autobiographical novel, he suggests, is one that centers in experiences which transform and mold a character, not one which merely resolves round a single outstanding real experience (139-42). In other words, it is “a narrative with intention”<sup>1)</sup> concerning one's life rather than a simple narrative of his or her life experiences. “Intention” here has played an essential role for an autobiographical novel in connecting the stories of the author, the narrator, and the main character. However, it should be an honest intention that holds up the truth of the narrative. So

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1) I use this term as one whose meaning is close to that of Frank Norris's “novel of purpose.” Norris classifies the novel of purpose as a novel which proves something, draws conclusions from a whole congeries of forces, social tendencies, and racial impulses, and devotes itself not to a study of men, but of man.

an autobiographical novel, as Roy Pascal states, depends on the “seriousness of the author, the seriousness of his personality and his intention in writing” (60). James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, for example, is a narrative with intention whose subject Joyce continued to pursue in his following novels, such as *Ulysses*. D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* is perhaps a better example of an autobiographical novel as a narrative with intention. The theme, or one of the many themes, of the novel, the ideal relationship between man and woman, is what Lawrence continues to deal with in such later novels as *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*. A life story or an experience may have provided Lawrence an impetus to write and, through writing, to attempt to project a solution to the problem that he had had in his early days.

As my definition of a narrative with intention suggests, one benefit of analyzing an autobiographical novel is concerned with its social and historical background. Every narrative is supposed to have its social, historical background, though the background may sometimes be imaginative or conjectural; however, an autobiographical novel, like an autobiography, naturally shows a strong involvement of the narrative in its socio-historical context. The novelist doesn't have to be faithful to the uttermost extent to the historical details of the time on which the story is based. He or she can expand or reduce the importance of a certain event which may have been significant or unnoticeable in those days, because the narrative is written in a retrospective way. Therefore, an autobiographical novel is not only a narrative of the principles drawn from the experiences that transform and mold a character, but also a narrative which can tell us of the historical details and perhaps the novelist's view of them. *Sons and Lovers* is an autobiographical novel that is heavily-loaded with historical and social meanings.

Some of social and historical contexts appear in Lawrence's novels in the form of the marriage of a man and a woman of different social classes. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is perhaps another example for this ideological intention. In this novel, Connie and Mellors are from different social classes. Connie, representing the traditional values and the higher class, is attracted to the lower-class person, Mellors whose primitive features guarantee, in a sense, the regeneration of the human race. And their

conflicts and their relationships with Sir Clifford obviously tell the reader of the class consciousness that was common in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

*Sons and Lovers* is full of the materials that are suggestive of the social conflicts of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century England. And these materials are given in the coherent form of a battle of pairs. In fact, *Sons and Lovers* has been criticized for its formlessness. Against this type of attack, Julian Moynahan argues that there are “three formal orders or matrices” (14)—autobiographical narrative, a scheme taken over from psychoanalytic theory, and the so-called “matrix of life” (14). These structures blend with each other and sometimes enrich one another. However, although Moynahan just passingly remarks on it, the novel is clearly structured on one consistent pattern, that is, the pattern of conflicts and battles. Sometimes this battle occurs between characters, and sometimes it occurs in one character's mind. So one character doesn't maintain only one feature throughout the novel. One can be seen differently in different relationships with different characters. Thus, Gertrude could be a radical character in her relationships with Walter; however, she is rather a traditional individual in her relationships with Paul toward the ideas of life and class. This essay will look into the relationships of different pairs, especially of the main characters, and discuss how ideological discourse on class is embedded in the narrative.

## II. BODY

In the nineteenth century, when the name of England represented richness and prosperity, the middle class had greatly increased in size to the extent that no one can define its boundary (Altick 25–33). The middle class regarded itself as the moral heart of Victorian society, so that what was good for it, it was generally agreed, was good for the nation. Beneath this class, there were thousands of the poor, the so-called “working-class” or later simply “the people” (Altick 34). The people of this class yearned to become included in the middle class and sometimes thought or even pretended as if they were of the middle class, which often resulted in bitter

disappointment. The scene where Walter meets Gertrude for the first time suggests that Walter is also conscious of his status in class and hers. Walter no doubt belongs to the working class, while Gertrude is from the once prosperous middle-class family. His boasts to her about his job as a miner (*S. L.*, 10–11)<sup>2)</sup>, however, suggest that he is acting like one of the “big butties” who are administration officials of the mine rather than simple working men (Griffin 128). In order to approach a woman whose social rank is higher than his, Walter has no choice but pretending to be a middle-class person. This act of Walter's tells of the general tendency of the people to move upward in class in the mid- and late-nineteenth century England.

Gertrude is different from Walter in every aspect. Although she marries Walter, it is not because she is attracted to his individual character. Rather it is because Walter's life and behavior are so new to her that Gertrude, a woman of strong curiosity, simply makes a decision to marry him, to explore a new world.

She [Gertrude] was puritan, like her father, high-minded, and really stern. Therefore the dusky, golden softness of this man's sensuous flame of life, that flowed off his flesh like the flame from a candle, not baffled and gripped into incandescence by thought and spirit as her life was, seemed to her something wonderful, beyond her. (10)

As is shown in the above passage, Gertrude is simply curious about a miner's life, fascinated with its newness and aliveness. And her reckless decision, in a sense, foreshadows the conflicts between her and her husband derived from the differences in education and social ranks.

Gertrude shows a strong desire to belong to the middle class after her marriage. She tries to make her house represent middle-class respectability and, through careful management, achieves it, complete with cherished bits of china, a piano, and the proverbial lace curtains. In addition, as Paul Delany suggests, her move up the hill, from “the Bottoms” to Scargill Street, is “an externalization of her desire both to rise, and to leave the more sordid aspects of working-class life behind and below her” (159). The best example of this characteristic of hers is when she argues

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2) The text used for the quotations in this paper is the Penguin edition of *Sons and Lovers*, edited by Julian Moynahan. From the next quotation from the text, I will note only the page numbers.

about William's future with Walter. She gets William a job in the Co-op office, and Walter responds to it negatively:

“What dost want ter ma’e a stool-harshed Jack on ‘im for?” said Morel. “All he’ll do is to wear his britches behind out, an’ earn nowt. What’s ‘e startin’ wi’?”

“It doesn’t matter what he’s starting with,” said Mrs. Morel.

“it wouldna! Put ‘im I’ th’ pit we me, an’ ‘e’ll earn a easy ten shillin’ a wik from th’ start. But six shillin’ wearin’ his truck-end out on a stool’s better than ten shillin’ I’ th’ pit wi’ me, I know.” (52)

At Walter's urge, Gertrude definitely takes her position: “He is *not* going in the pit, . . . and there's an end of it” (52). What she can't bear to think is her children going *down* into the pit with their father. However, she must not build up this aversion to the thought of her children becoming miners on the basis of economic reasons, because, according to Griffin, a family with a miner father and three miner children had the income high enough to make the family life comparatively comfortable (134–35). It is rather her class consciousness that prevents her from allowing her children to become miners. The general tendency of people towards social class, especially the prosperous middle class, in those days is reflected in the conceptual difference between Walter's and Gertrude's world views.

This characteristic of that period is also shown in the careers of their sons, William and Paul. Lawrence once wrote a letter to Edward Garnett, regarding his composition of *Sons and Lovers*: “It [*Sons and Lovers*] is a great tragedy, and I tell you I have written a great book. It's the tragedy of thousands of young men in England” (Newmarch 73). Considering the novel as autobiographical, Lawrence certainly had himself in mind when he wrote this phrase, in which case the “tragedy” of thousands of young men in England is represented by Paul's life story. In addition, as David Newmarch points out, the “tragedy” of the story may refer to William's, for William's career in the novel is more moving and tragic than Paul's. Both of the cases make sense, but the difference is that the one is true symbolically, while the other, literally. To explain Paul's tragic career as representative of thousands of young men, we need to view the struggles between Walter and Gertrude from another perspective, rather than from one centered only on class issues, which will be treated later. William's career, however, is

neatly fit for the present consideration of class movements.

At the age of sixteen, William is already the best clerk in the office in Bestwood; and from this time he becomes ambitious about his future. At nineteen, he leaves the office in Bestwood and moves to a position in Nottingham and then to London. It is obvious, therefore, his movements are intended toward the very center of industry from the marginal small town of Bestwood, and upward to the prosperous middle class from the working class. He is the pride of the Morels, especially of Gertrude, and of the town. His efforts to educate himself, however, should not be seen as an exceptional case in those days between 1903 and 1904, although perhaps his initial success is. In reality, every young man in a small mining town tried to learn practical and commercial skills in order to get on in the world (Griffin 149). And even Lawrence himself when he visited Ford Madox Ford with some manuscripts, was regarded by Ford as a young man who was desperate to make money and “desperate to climb upward into the metropolitan community” (Gavrila 202). William, the model of thousands of young English men in his time, however, eventually becomes a victim of the pitiless industrial society of the early twentieth-century England, struggling to the end of his life to fulfill his desire for belonging to the higher class society. The “tragedy of thousands of young men in England,” therefore, can refer to William's life story, for his career can represent those of thousands of young men who aspired a higher-class life, but only failed.

In order to become a tragedy, on the other hand, Paul's career should be seen from quite a different perspective from one centered on class issues, that is, from the perspective more focused on ideological debates between the traditional and the radical or the “new” ideas in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century England. Any intellectually-awakened young man of England in those days might well be aware of the evolutionary ideas, which then permeated almost all the fields of art and science, and of the new value systems which were influenced by the vigorous feminist or socialist movements. It was the period when one value system begins to collapse or at least be challenged, and another is introduced, but not yet quite established. This characteristic of the period led young men of England to doubt the existing values that their father and mother had believed in. Paul Morel is symbolically a typical figure of the young

intellectual who had to fill the huge gap between the traditional and the new values and thereby suffered. The basis for this discussion, however, lies in the struggles between Walter and Gertrude, each of whom represents the traditional and the new ways of thinking and life respectively.

In the beginning of the novel, the introductory descriptions of Walter and Gertrude enable us to presume their roles as representatives of the traditional or conservative and the radical or new in the narrative. When Walter meets Gertrude for the first time and sees her surprised at the fact that he began to go down the pit at ten, he answers, "You soon get used to it. You live like th' mice, an' you pop out at night to see what's going on" (11). As this phrase suggests, he feels more comfortable at getting used to things and leaving them as they are, rather than changing them. Unlike Walter who gets his pleasure in acting, however, Gertrude has a curious, receptive mind which finds much pleasure and amusement on religion, philosophy, or politics and is able to appreciate new things and ideas. What prompts her to decide to marry Walter, in fact, is "a new tract of life" which she thinks Walter can provide her (11). Thus, the potential conditions of conflicts between Walter and Gertrude, representing the traditional and the new or radical, such as monotonousness or unchangeability and progressiveness, are already present in the early stage of the narrative.

As their married life goes on, this representational aspect of the characters becomes more conspicuous. When Walter and Gertrude argue, Walter always tries to confirm his patriarchal authority as the husband in the house, while Gertrude refuses to do what a normal housewife is supposed to do for her husband:

"Then tha should get the flamin' thing thysen. Tha should get up, like other women have to, an' wait on a man."

"Wait on you—wait on you?" she cried. "Yes, I see myself."

"Yis, an' I'll learn thee tha's got to. Wait on me, yes tha sh'lt wait on me—"

"Never, milord. I'd wait on a dog at the door first." (38).

Angered by her retort and outright contempt, Walter, although unintentionally, threw a drawer at her, and her brow is cut and starts to bleed. Walter's insistence on his patriarchal right as a husband often leads

to a fighting, and because of his violent actions Gertrude moves away from him both in body and mind. Also, this kind of result of their confrontation makes Walter feel small and stay away from her and their children.

Walter's space in the home, therefore, becomes more and more narrow, and at last he is regarded as "an outsider" (63). When we think of the older, aggressively patriarchal tradition of working-class culture, "whereby a woman had rights in the home only by grace of her husband, the 'Lord and master'" (Delany 155), this awkward situation of Walter in his palace is hardly imaginable and even leads him to adopt a somewhat contemptible means to revenge himself on Gertrude; that is, he bullies her, relying on his superiority of earning ability to her. The mid- and late-Victorian woman, it is well known, was not expected to earn her own living and, therefore, was supposed to remain forever dependent upon man—first as a daughter and then as a wife (Andrew 1-2). Walter must know this and now uses it as his ultimate weapon to assure his wife of his authority in the family. At this stage of the narrative, the only place he feels his authority secure is not the home but the pub, the place for males only, which Gertrude hates. Thus, the struggles between Walter and Gertrude are not simply family events, but also, or more tellingly, characteristic of the cultural aspect of the period that the male-oriented traditional values which had dominated English culture from the upper class down to the working class began to lose their authority.

Some of Gertrude's acts, it seems to me, are more strongly suggestive of the contemporary social movements than Walter's. That Gertrude is an intelligent, middle-class woman may carry more than its autobiographical meaning that Lawrence's mother was a middle-class school teacher. Since we have extended the microcosmic world of a working-class family to a macrocosmic world which can represent English society in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, it might not be too hazardous to say that Gertrude is a female figure in whom the early English feminist's character is condensed. English feminism, roughly speaking, began in 1865 when the Kensington Society was formed. Most of its members were "young, intelligent, middle-class and unmarried" women (Rosen 5). Their interest was in higher education for women and in women's suffrage, which, they believed, would lead the status of women up to the level in which



society could hear women's voice as clearly as men's. The continuing efforts of women for their suffrage went through a temporary letup from 1884 to 1897 and culminated in 1903 when the Women's Social and Political Union was founded with Mrs. Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel as its central figures. It is of this socio-historical background that Gertrude's assertion of her will to family matters and her refusal of the subordination to Walter remind us.

The association of Gertrudes' fighting in the home with the early feminist's movements is even more convincing because Gertrude and Walter's fighting can be analyzed as those over the symbolically hierarchical places in the home, "from which people can 'look down' on others, can give each other 'no room,' or can drive the weaker 'to the wall'" (Delany 153). Basically, the places that they try to occupy in the home are the threshold and the hearth. The threshold marks the boundary between the home and the outside world, and the hearth is the center of actual warmth and symbolic affection (Delany 155). In the beginning, the hearth seems to belong to Walter as we often see him sit in front of the hearth; as the story proceeds, however, it is Gertrude who controls the space around the hearth. All the colliers know that "the hearth is sacred to the family" (199), but, in the middle of the novel, they are invited, or allowed, to sit in front of it with Gertrude's permission and not Walter's.

Just then Wesson entered. He was thin, rather frail-looking, . . .

. . . . .

The newcomer took off his cap and his big woollen muffler. His nose was pointed and red.

"I'm afraid you're cold, Mr. Wesson," said Mrs. Morel.

"It's a bit nippy," he replied.

"Then come to the fire."

"Nay, I s'll do whre I am."

Both colliers [Wesson and Barker] sat away back. They could not be induced to come on to the hearth. The hearth is sacred to the family.

"Go thy ways I' th' arm-chair," cried Morel cheerily.

"Nay, thank yer; I'm very nicely here."

"Yes, come, of course," insisted Mrs. Morel.

He rose and went awkwardly. He sat in Morel's arm-chair awkwardly. It was too great a familiarity. But the fire made him blissfully happy. (199)

It's a great honor, indeed, to sit on an arm-chair in front of the fire,

which is entitled to the head of the family, the husband. Wessen knows that it belongs to Walter. However, with Gertrude's insistence, or permission, he finally takes a seat in front of the fire.

The passing of the threshold is also traditionally governed by the head of the family, the father. For this reason, Jerry enters unasked into the house; but in this case, too, he simply stands by the kitchen doorway, "cooly asserting the rights of men and husbands" (20). Two important places of the home all belong to Gertrude, and Walter feels comfortable in front of the fireplace only early in the morning with nobody around him. Thus, as Walter becomes an outsider about the family matters or emotions, he loses the physical space in the home which has been traditionally regarded as his own.

Another important act of Gertrude's is that she joins the Women's Guild. The Guild is a small club of women, which meets on Monday nights to "discuss the benefits to be derived from co-operation, and other social questions" (51). Above all the influences of the Guild upon women, it is the most significant that it may enable women to be both economically and intelligently independent:

The Guild was called by some hostile husbands, who found their wives getting too independent, the 'clat-fart' shop—that is, the gossip shop. It is true, from off the basis of the Guild, the women could look at their homes, at the conditions of their own lives, and find fault. So colliers found their women had a new standard of their own, rather disconcerting. (51)

Walter has used his status as the only breadwinner in the family to bully Gertrude. If housewives could get financially independent from their husbands, the patriarchal authority will no doubt collapse. So the colliers are disconcerted with their wives being influenced by the Guild. But in fact, this situation that they are afraid to be placed in is what actually happens in the Morels and what was actually happening in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century England.

With these considerations of the struggles between Walter and Gertrude in mind, let us go back to the earlier argument that Paul's career can be also seen as "the tragedy of thousands of young men in England." Unlike William who is a practical office clerk, Paul is a would-be artist sensitive to the conceptual ideas surrounding his life. So he is more ready to accept

a new idea than William. Instead of going up the class ladder in a way typical of those days, he pursues a spiritual ladder that leads not only to the materially upper class but also to the ideal state of living. Obviously he dislikes Walter who represents the traditional values of the working class; and he loves his mother who symbolizes the progressive, radical values.

However, although Paul loves his mother more than anyone else in the novel, he differs with her in several aspects. One of their disagreements is regarding his future. Gertrude wants Paul to pursue the same future as William to have a decent job and marry a woman of education and a higher class. Paul has a different dream for his future. But at the beginning of the novel, he doesn't reveal his dream to his mother and simply follows her, though feeling frustrated at her wish.

“What do you want to be?” his mother asked.

“Anything.”

“That’s no answer,” said Mrs. Morel.

But it was quite truthfully the only answer he could give. His ambition, as far as this world’s gear went, was quietly to earn his thirty or thirty-five shillings a week somewhere near home, and then, when his father died, have a cottage with his mother, paint and go out as he liked, and live happy ever after. . . . And he thought that perhaps he might also make a painter, the real thing. But that he left alone.

“Then,” said his mother, “you must look in the paper for the advertisements.”

He looked at her. It seemed to him a bitter humiliation and an anguish to go through. But he said nothing. (88-9)

Paul's dream for his future is different from what Walter wants his children to have, but at the same time it is also different from William's dream that is very similar to Gertrude's wish for her children. She simply wants her children to follow the mechanical formula that every young man of England of those days would take to succeed, to move up in social class. However, in Paul's mind there are no such things as class or success. He just wants to live with his mother, doing what he wants to enjoy with a little money he could earn.

Paul's attitude to the upward movement of social class and Gertrude's come later in the novel again. And this time Paul expresses his mind clearly to his mother, although yielding to her argument. The following excerpt is rather long for this essay, but it is inevitable to show Gertrude's

class consciousness and Paul's that will lead later to the tragic quality of Paul's story.

"You know," he said to his mother, "I don't want to belong to the well-to-do middle class. I like my common people best. I belong to the common people."

"But if anyone else said so, my son, wouldn't you be in a tear. You know you consider yourself equal to any gentleman."

"In myself," he answered, "not in my class or my education or my manners. But in myself I am."

"Very well, then. Then why talk about the common people?"

"Because—the difference between people isn't in their class, but in themselves. Only from the middle classes one gets ideas, and from the common people—life itself, warmth. You feel their hates and loves."

"It's all very well, my boy. But, then, why don't you go and talk to your father's pals?"

"But they're rather different."

"Not at all. They're the common people. After all, whom do you mix with now—among the common people? Those that exchange ideas, like the middle classes. The rest don't interest you."

. . . . .

"I don't believe there's a jot more life from Miriam than you could get from any educated girl—say Miss Moreton. It is you who are snobbish about class." (256)

In this passage, it is obvious that Paul's idea about class or life is totally different from his mother's. Gertrude sticks to the common ideology of upward class movement of her time and persuades Paul to accept the reality. On the other hand, Paul takes on a rather radical position that class doesn't guarantee one's inner quality which, he thinks, is the most important element in life. Success, or happiness in Gertrude's term, is nothing to him.

She frankly *wanted* him to climb into the middle classes, a thing not very difficult, she knew. And she wanted him in the end to marry a lady. . . . [S]he wished he would fall in love with one of the girls in a better station of life. But he was stupid, and would refuse to love or even to admire a girl much, just because she was his social superior.

"My boy," said his mother to him, "all your cleverness, **your breaking away from old things**, and taking life in your own, doesn't seem to bring you much happiness."

"What is happiness!" he cried. "It's nothing to me! How am I to be happy?"

. . . . .

"That's for you to judge, my lad. But if you could meet some *good* woman who would *make* you happy—and you began to think of settling your life—when

you have the means—so that you could work without all this fretting—it would be much better for you.” . . . .

“You mean easy, mother,” he cried. “That’s a woman’s whole doctrine for life—ease of soul and physical comfort. And I do despise it. . . . But damn your happiness! So long as life’s full, it doesn’t matter whether it’s happy or not. I’m afraid your happiness would bore me.” (256–57; boldface added)

As Gertrude points out here, Paul’s idea for his future is not a conventional and widely-accepted thought. It’s a new idea. According to his value, the quality of life lies not in class but in the self, the spirit. However, Gertrude wants her son to be a common English young man of those days trying to climb up the class ladder. Their conflicts are, therefore, the conflicts of ideologies, of the conventional idea of class and a new Lawrentian idea of life.

Paul loves his mother deeply. His love for her is so deep that he can’t love another woman. His inability to conduct a love life, as is generally agreed, is due to his spiritual love for his mother that is too deeply rooted in his mind to yield to the love for another woman. A lot of critics have discussed this aspect from the Freudian perspective, explaining it off by an Oedipal complex. However, it can also be explained by his inner conflicts regarding his future, or married life. And the conflicts are derived from his awareness of his mother’s position about his future and thereby his helplessness. Paul wants to pursue and form his spiritual life which is not limited by any social rule or interest. Paul also wants to taste the pleasure of physical love with Clara. And he wants to do both freely without any restriction. The restriction comes from the presence of Gertrude and her wish. But still he loves her deeply. Because of his helplessness in this situation, he sometimes becomes self-destructive, which is, he thinks, one way of revenge against his woman (Miriam and Gertrude) and the world: “Recklessness is almost a man’s revenge on his woman. He feels he is not valued, so he will risk destroying himself to deprive her altogether” (190).

However, when we remember Lawrence’s remark of the novel as the tragedy of thousands of young men, this inability and his inner conflicts take on a new meaning. They may suggest Paul’s symbolic conflicts derived from his discovery of the weaknesses and limitation of the radical, new ideas to which he has so attached himself. Many young men of England in those days must have suffered the same problem as Paul does in the novel.

They attempt to advance in the social class either by following the code of action specified by the tradition like William or by refusing it altogether like Paul. Lawrence himself had to meet a lot of questions in his mind, regarding religion or the concept of the community, which were raised mainly from the discrepancies between the traditional and the new or radical ideas (Gavrila 212–14). But most of them, like William, fail in their attempts and get destroyed. And most of them come to know the discrepancies between reality and their ideas and get frustrated like Paul. But Lawrence is not pessimistic on this matter. For he ends the narrative with a hopeful note.

But no, he would not give in. Turning sharply, he walked towards the city's gold phosphorescence. His fists were shut, and 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.  
(420)

Paul still thinks of his mother and tries to rely on her. But he doesn't want to lose the battle of life. He doesn't want to follow her to the darkness. Instead, Paul heads toward the town, the battlefield of ideologies and the ultimate battlefield of his inner conflicts. He goes “quickly,” which is the word in Lawrence's work connoting liveliness and hope. So although Lawrence shows William's and Paul's life stories, the epitome of the tragedy of thousands of young men of England, throughout the novel, he suggests at the end a solution to the tragic forces of reality and its strong possibility of realization. In his thought, class should no longer shackle the individual life, and the quality of life can only be determined by one's self.

### III. CONCLUSION

*Sons and Lovers* is no doubt a story of Paul's early life and possibly his initiation into the artistic world. One can easily predict from the reading of the novel what Paul's artistic subject would be. However, the novel does not only tell of Paul's life story, but also of other social issues that surround him. Since this is an autobiographical novel, we may ignore the ideological discourse which is hidden under the surface and simply investigate the biographical materials. Or we may just look at the unusual

attachment of Paul to his mother in a Freudian point of view, which in fact has been too much applied to the novel. However, the ideological discourse, especially on class struggles, still can provide another thematic structure to the novel. And it can add to the already abundant and profound Lawrence study an interesting but productive way of reading the novel.

Thematically, *Sons and Lovers* is a novel of conflicts. And the conflicts are always shown in the form of the battle of pairs. The pairs can be either two characters or two different characteristics of one's self. Thus, one character can be understood differently in his or her relationships with different counterparts. Walter and Gertrude are not simply fictional characters for Lawrence's father and mother; but, as I have shown, they can be seen as the embodiments of two completely different value systems in Lawrence's time, the traditional and the radical values. And their dogmatic struggles are symbolic of the conflicts between those value systems. However, Gertrude, representing the radical value in her relationships with Walter, changes into an embodiment of the conventional and commonplace middle-class ideology in her relationships with Paul and William. Paul represents a new idea or solution to the problematic society. All these characters show a somewhat ambivalent attitude of love and hatred toward each other, and their stories are certainly characteristic of ideological discourse on life.

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