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ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FATHER IMAGE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE⁶

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the father figure in D.H. Lawrence's novel "Sons and Lovers," analyzing the character Walter Morel as a symbolic representation of English fathers in the early 20th century. The article highlights his attempts to maintain paternal authority, his emotional limitations, and the family conflicts that arise due to his alcoholism and aggression. Furthermore, the study analyzes the psychological aspects of Walter's character, revealing how social, economic, and industrial factors influence his role as a father. By depicting Walter not as a villain but as a complex and multifaceted human being, Lawrence emphasizes the fragility of traditional paternal authority and its long-term impact on family relationships and the formation of personal identity.

KEYWORDS

Walter Morel, father figure, patriarchal authority, family conflict, psychological analysis

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INGLIZ ADABIYOTIDA OTA OBRAZINING TAHLILI VA TALQINI

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ANNOTATSIYA	KALIT SO‘ZLAR
Ushbu maqolada D.H. Lourensning “Sons and Lovers” (O‘g‘illar va sevimlilar) romanidagi ota obrazi tadqiq etilib, asar qahramoni Valter Morel XX asr boshlaridagi ingliz otalarining ramziy timsoli sifatida tahlil qilinadi. Maqolada uning otalik hokimiyatini saqlab qolishga bo‘lgan urinishlari, hissiy jihatdan cheklanganligi hamda ichkilikbozligi va tajovuzkorligi tufayli oilada yuzaga keladigan nizolar yoritiladi. Shuningdek, tadqiqot Uolter obrazining psixologik jihatlarini tahlil qilib, ijtimoiy, iqtisodiy va sanoat omillarining uning ota sifatidagi roliga qanday ta’sir ko‘rsatishini ochib beradi. Lourens Valterni yomon qahramon sifatida emas, balki murakkab va ko‘p qirrali insoniy shaxs sifatida tasvirlab, an’anaviy otalik hokimiyatining zaifligi hamda uning oilaviy munosabatlar va shaxsiy o‘zlik shakllanishiga uzoq muddatli ta’sirini alohida ta’kidlab tasvirlaydi.	Uolter Morel, ota obrazi, otalik hokimiyati, oilaviy ziddiyat, psixologik tahlil.

АНАЛИЗ И ИНТЕРПРЕТАЦИЯ ОБРАЗА ОТЦА В АНГЛИЙСКОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЕ

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АННОТАЦИЯ	КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА
В данной статье исследуется образ отца в романе Д.Х. Лоуренса “Sons and Lovers” («Сыновья и любовники»), при этом образ Уолтера Морела рассматривается как художественное воплощение типа английского отца начала XX века. Анализируется стремление героя сохранить отцовский авторитет, эмоциональная ограниченность, а также семейные конфликты, обусловленные его алкогольной зависимостью и агрессивным поведением. Кроме того, анализируются психологические аспекты образа Уолтера Морела и раскрывается влияние социальных, экономических и индустриальных факторов на его роль отца. Лоуренс изображает Уолтера не как однозначно отрицательного персонажа, а как сложную и многогранную личность, акцентируя внимание на слабости традиционной отцовской власти и её долгосрочном влиянии на семейные отношения и формирование личности детей.	Уолтер Морель, образ отца, патриархальная власть, семейный конфликт, психологический анализ.

INTRODUCTION

The father figure has been a central character in English literature, as he has been seen at the center of the social and cultural life of the time, reflecting not only the family relationships but also the wider world around him. In general, fathers were seen as the backbone of the family: strong, stable, and guiding. They were seen as moral guides and the head of the family, providing order and stability in the family. However, by the late 19th and early 20th centuries, industrialisation, changing ideas about gender, and new social values had begun to challenge the old model of fathers. They were now becoming more than just symbols of power or moral excellence. This was, of course, greatly influenced by social life. Writers also began to consider that when creating characters, they could be created as flawed, conflicted, or unstable individuals, rather than perfect human beings.

D.H. Lawrence (1885–1930) is a famous English modernist writer, one of the most famous figures of English literature. During his career, he wrote various novels, short stories, poems, and essays. The works created by the writer are mainly aimed at illuminating the relationships between society and people, family life, the inner world of a person and his spiritual world, expressing the deep psychological states of the characters, their internal conflicts and, at the same time, their shortcomings.

The novel “Sons and Lovers”, written in 1913, is recognized as one of the writer’s most famous works and is one of the coming-of-age novels, combining psychological and social realism. The events of this novel take place in an industrial mining community in England at the beginning of the 20th century; it combines stories about coming of age with psychological and social realism. The central idea of the work is focused on the theme of family, and the important role of fathers and mothers in raising children is illustrated by the life of the protagonist Paul Morel, whose emotional attachment to his mother causes many problems. This, of course, can be said to have arisen due to the role of Walter Morel, who is embodied as the father in the work, and the mistakes and shortcomings in his upbringing.

MAIN PART

A person’s emotional and psychological development is significantly influenced by their family relationships. In addition to being biological figures, parents are frequently portrayed in literature as providers of direction, safety,

emotional support, and personal influence. Traditionally, a father's role in the family has been linked to security, accountability, and moral instruction; nevertheless, understanding, communication, and emotional participation are also necessary for a successful paternal relationship. When there is power but no emotional bond, the family may become divided rather than united.

Walter Morel's character in D. H. Lawrence's "Sons and Lovers" represents the tension between the emotional demands of family members and traditional values of parenting. Lawrence portrays parenthood through Walter Morel as a complicated experience influenced by one's own personality, social surroundings, and familial ties. As a working-class father, Walter makes an effort to fulfill the roles of provider and dominant figure, but his position rapidly weakens due to his limited ability to speak honestly, express his emotions, and fully understand his family's feelings.

In "Sons and Lovers", Walter Morel is shown as a traditional father, whose authority comes mainly from being the family's provider. As a coal miner, he represents the working-class ideal of masculinity, tied to hard physical work and control at home. At first, Walter is lively, with his friendly, outgoing qualities that initially attract his wife, Gertrude. But as time goes on, their differences in education and tastes become clear. Mrs. Morel is refined and thoughtful, while Walter is uneducated and often emotionally rigid, which creates tension in their marriage. He tries to maintain his role as the head of the family, but his impulsive actions and lack of understanding of his wife's feelings weaken his authority. So, even though he shows some traditional fatherly traits, Walter Morel falls short of the patriarchal ideal, making him a more human and complex character.

"When she was twenty-three years old, she met, at a Christmas party, a young man from the Erewash Valley. Morel was then twenty-seven years old. He was well set-up, erect, and very smart. He had wavy black hair that shone again, and a vigorous black beard that had never been shaved. His cheeks were ruddy, and his red moist mouth was noticeable because he laughed so often and so heartily. He had that rare thing, a rich, ringing laugh. Gertrude Coppard had watched him, fascinated. He was so full of colour and animation, his voice ran so easily into comic

grotesque, he was so ready and so pleasant with everybody. Her own father had a rich fund of humour, but it was satiric. This man's was different: soft, non-intellectual, warm, a kind of gambolling". (Lawrence, 1971, 9).

Early on, he was portrayed as full of energy and life. *"He was well set-up, erect, and very smart... He was full of colour and animation, his voice ran so easily into comic grotesque, he was so ready and so pleasant with everybody"*. These qualities render Walter lively, sociable, and engaging, traits that initially captivate Gertrude Morel and establish him as a focal figure within the domestic sphere. At the same time, Lawrence highlights the cultural and emotional gap between Walter and his wife: *"Her own father had a rich fund of humour, but it was satiric. This man's was different: soft, non-intellectual, warm"*. Although Walter displays certain traditional characteristics of fatherhood, his lack of education and emotional fragility gradually reveal the limitations of his authority, creating issues in the marriage. Although he tries to take on the traditional role of the patriarch, Walter Morel often struggles to fully live up to it. His character shows the fragility and complexity that many of the early twentieth-century literary fathers share.

The Morel family is characterized by constant tension, largely due to Walter Morel's troubled relationship with his wife, Gertrude. His drinking and impulsive aggression repeatedly disrupt family relations and undermine his efforts to establish paternal authority. These behaviors create a stressful, turbulent environment in the family and gradually alienate the children from their father. It reveals the fragility of traditional patriarchal authority in a beautiful way. As one critic has noted, "One of Lawrence's most accomplished achievements is his depiction of the hatred that Morel's family feels for him, which includes his violent outbursts toward a woman he barely knows. Although they ultimately fall to his wife's indifference, they are interspersed with delightful cameos that portray him as independent and absorbed in his profession and the soothing rhythms of the day and week. At the end of the day, Walter Morel is so intelligent and fearful of his angry wife that he receives much narrative sympathy, despite (or perhaps because of) his awkward attempts to reclaim patriarchal authority and his repeated ostracism" (Matroud, 2024, 227).

As a result, Walter often loses control and struggles to understand his emotions. This shows that being a father in early twentieth-century English literature is complicated and sometimes uncertain.

“Walter Morel lay in bed next day until nearly dinner-time. He did not think of the previous evening’s work. He scarcely thought of anything, but he would not think of that. He lay and suffered like a sulking dog. He had hurt himself most; and he was the more damaged because he would never say a word to her, or express his sorrow. He tried to wriggle out of it. “It was her own fault”, he said to himself. Nothing, however, could prevent his inner consciousness inflicting on him the punishment which ate into his spirit like rust, and which he could only alleviate by drinking.”(Lawrence, 1971, 40-41).

The excerpt from the novel can show how his character is: *“...would never say a word to her, or express his sorrow...”*, showing that he cannot share his feelings with his wife, Gertrude. Instead of taking responsibility, he blames her: *“It was her own fault”*. Despite this, his inner thoughts punish him, *“which ate into his spirit like rust”*, and the only way he tries to feel better is by drinking. This shows that Walter is trapped between his own pride, his inability to communicate, and his emotional pain. His weaknesses create tension at home and make it difficult for him to be a strong, caring father or husband. Through this, Lawrence reveals both the human side of Walter and the way his personal struggles lead to an unhappy family life.

“Walter Morel was, at this time, exceedingly irritable. His work seemed to exhaust him. When he came home he did not speak civilly to anybody. If the fire were rather low he bullied about that; he grumbled about his dinner; if the children made a chatter he shouted at them in a way that made their mother’s blood boil, and made them hate him” (Lawrence, 1971, 50).

Walter Morel’s difficulties as a father are also reflected in his everyday behaviour within the family. His exhaustion from industrial labour often influences his emotional state and interactions with his wife and children. The description that *“his work seemed to exhaust him”* shows that Walter’s aggressive behaviour is partly connected with the physical and psychological pressure of working-class life.

However, instead of expressing his frustration through communication, he directs his anger toward his family, creating fear and emotional distance.

The fact that Walter “*shouted at them in a way that made their mother’s blood boil, and made them hate him*” shows how his inability to control his emotions gradually damages his relationship with his children. Although he attempts to maintain authority as the father of the household, his harsh behavior weakens the respect and affection that should exist between a parent and child. Through this portrayal, Lawrence presents the conflict between traditional paternal authority and the emotional needs of the family. Walter’s role as a provider gives him social power, but his lack of emotional understanding prevents him from achieving a genuinely close relationship with his children.

In “Sons and Lovers”, Walter Morel gradually loses his authority in the family. His aggressive behavior, emotional distance, and inability to understand his children’s needs make it difficult for him to maintain respect and influence in the home. Over time, his children, especially Paul, grow closer to their mother, Gertrude, seeking the emotional support and guidance that Walter cannot provide. This shift shows how the traditional patriarchal system is breaking down. The father’s role as head of the family is weakened by personal shortcomings. Lawrence shows that a father’s authority doesn’t come automatically from his role or tradition – it has to be earned through understanding, care, and real communication.

“The tea-things were on the table. William was reading aloud from ‘The Child’s Own’, Annie listening and asking eternally “why?” Both children hushed into silence as they heard the approaching thud of their father’s stockinged feet, and shrank as he entered. Yet he was usually indulgent to them. Morel made the meal alone, brutally. He ate and drank more noisily than he had need. No one spoke to him. The family life withdrew, shrank away, and became hushed as he entered. But he cared no longer about his alienation” (Lawrence, 1971, 41-42).

This piece from Sons and Lovers illustrates Walter Morel’s declining authority within the family. When he enters the room, the children immediately become quiet and withdraw: *“Both children hushed into silence as they heard the*

approaching thud of their father's stockinged feet, and shrank as he entered", showing that his presence no longer inspires respect or warmth but rather fear or distance. Even though Walter is described as sometimes indulgent, he is increasingly isolated, preparing and eating his meals alone and noisily, *"Morel made the meal alone, brutally. He ate and drank more noisily than he had need"*. The family's withdrawal demonstrates the breakdown of his central role: he no longer commands attention or connection, and his alienation, *"But he cared no longer about his alienation"*, signals his acceptance of the loss of influence. Lawrence uses this scene to emphasize that Walter's paternal authority is fragile and that his inability to emotionally engage with his children has left him marginalized within his family.

"Paul hated his father. As a boy he had a fervent private religion. "Make him stop drinking", he prayed every night. "Lord, let my father die", he prayed very often. "Let him not be killed at pit", he prayed when, after tea, the father did not come home from work" (Lawrence, 1971, p. 50).

The impact of Walter Morel's behaviour on his children is most clearly reflected through Paul's emotional response to his father. The statement that "Paul hated his father" reveals not only anger but also the deep psychological distance that has developed between them. As a child, Paul's repeated prayers – *"Make him stop drinking"* and *"Let my father die"* – demonstrate the extent to which Walter's alcoholism and aggressive behavior affect his son's emotional world. Rather than seeing his father as a source of protection and security, Paul associates him with fear, conflict, and family suffering.

This psychological conflict shows that Walter's failure as a father is not only connected with his inability to provide emotional support but also with the lasting influence of his actions on his children's development. Paul's feelings reflect a broken father-son relationship in which fear replaces affection and distance replaces trust. Through Paul's experience, Lawrence emphasizes that paternal responsibility extends beyond economic provision and authority; it also requires emotional stability, understanding, and a supportive presence in a child's life.

METHODS

This study applies qualitative research methods within the field of literary studies to examine the representation of father figures in English novels. The research primarily employs literary analysis, psychological analysis, and contextual analysis approaches.

The literary analysis method is used to explore the characterization of fathers, their actions, narrative roles, and their influence on family relationships. Through this approach, the study investigates how father figures are constructed and how their roles change within different literary periods.

The psychological approach is applied to analyze the emotional connections between fathers and children, focusing on issues such as communication, affection, authority, and emotional distance. This method is particularly important in examining Walter Morel's relationship with his wife and children in D. H. Lawrence's "Sons and Lovers".

Additionally, contextual analysis is used to understand how social, cultural, and historical factors influence the representation of fathers. The study considers the impact of industrial society, working-class conditions, and changing family structures on the development of father figures in literature in the 20th century.

RESULTS

The traditional paternal type of the early twentieth-century English working-class family is depicted by Walter Morel in D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*. The results point out that Walter's identity is primarily associated with his position as the leader of the household and an economic contributor. However, his emotional limitations, personal flaws, and the demands of industrial working-class existence make it difficult for him to carry out this job.

The study shows that emotional control, anger, drinking, and communication issues have an impact on Walter's relationships with his wife and kids. His lack of emotional connection gradually erodes his position, especially in his relationship with Paul Morel, even though he makes an effort to maintain his authority within the family. Lawrence portrays a more complex image of a father who is also a victim of social pressure, economic difficulties, and personal emotional limitations. Thus, Walter Morel

should not be viewed merely as an unsuccessful father; rather, he represents a changing model of fatherhood shaped by industrial society and family tensions.

DISCUSSION

Walter Morel is not simply a “bad” father; his behavior reflects deeper psychological and social factors. The table below summarizes his main traits and influences. “Look at the first table”.

1st table

Psychological Aspects of Walter Morel

No.	Trait / Behavior	Explanation / Cause	Effect on Family
1	Emotionally restricted	Cannot express sorrow or feelings	Children feel distant, wife frustrated
2	Misunderstood	Differences in education and cultural values with Gertrude	Fails to connect meaningfully with family
3	Social / environmental pressure	Industrial life, working-class hardships	Stress, reliance on alcohol as coping
4	Attempts at authority	Tries to maintain patriarchal role	Often ignored, weakened central role

The analysis of Walter Morel’s character shows that his representation as a father cannot be understood only through the idea of failure or weakness. As shown in the first table, Walter’s emotional distance, limited ability to communicate, and attempts to preserve authority. His inability to express affection and emotions creates a gap between him and his family members, especially his wife Gertrude, whose intellectual and cultural aspirations differ significantly from his own. Therefore, their conflict is not only a personal disagreement but also a reflection of the social and cultural differences between two worlds, which cause misunderstandings and issues. Walter Morel’s behavior is also strongly influenced by the social and economic difficulties of industrial working-class life – as a miner, he experiences physical exhaustion, financial problems, and the pressures of a harsh industrial environment. His dependence on alcohol can be interpreted not only as a personal weakness but also as a form of escape from the frustrations and limitations of his social position. Lawrence, for this reason, presents

Walter as a father shaped by his environment, showing how external circumstances affect family relationships and masculine identity.

CONCLUSION

The character of Walter Morel in *Sons and Lovers* can be seen as a true representation of the English father of the early twentieth century. He embodies the traditional patriarchal model, striving to maintain power as the economic provider and head of the family. However, several personality flaws, in particular his emotional limitations in his relationships with family members and the pressures of working-class industrial life, and many factors prevent him from fully fulfilling his role as a father. The novel highlights how his aggressive nature, alcoholism, and emotional distance in his relationships with his children greatly affect his position in the family. Lawrence did not intend to portray Walter as a negative character but simply as a typical figure of his time, with ordinary human flaws. The struggles of this hero in his inner world and in his external relationships reflect the fact that, to a certain extent, the duties and responsibilities of fathers of that time towards their families were beginning to change. His family wants to see him not only as a manager and provider, but also as a listener, helper, advisor, and emotionally close person. In this way, “*Sons and Lovers*” is a work that deeply expresses the problems and changes faced by fathers at the beginning of the 20th century, namely, the complex situations related to their fatherly duties, personal character and psychological experiences, human values, and the difficulties felt and experienced by fathers of that time.

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