

# Unveiling Autonomy And Desire: A Psycho-Feminist Exploration Of Gertrude's Rebellion In D.H. Lawrence's Sons And Lovers (1913)

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## Abstract

This study investigates how a female subverts the traditional patriarchal view of women as passive objects of desire and how she pursues her own desires and makes choices that are not solely determined by male expectations in D.H Lawrence's Sons and Lovers. The study is viewed through the lens of psycho-feminism. The chief argument of the study is that Gertrude is stuck in patriarchal chains. It is only her true efforts for empowerment and autonomy in societal norms that rebel against traditional gender roles, seeking independence and self-fulfillment. The study is qualitative by pursuing the character analysis of Gertrude. The study found that her unconventional behavior leads to conflicts within her family, affecting her relationships with her husband and children. The study also examined how Gertrude's journey towards autonomy and empowerment in Sons and Lovers is marked by a mixture of successes and failures. While she exhibits a strong will to defy societal norms and assert herself, her overbearing nature and romantic entanglements ultimately hinder her path to true

autonomy and self-empowerment. The study contributes to a broader discussion on the impacts of gender roles on familial relationships.

Keywords: autonomy and empowerment, patriarchal view, psychoanalysis, Sons and Lovers, independence and fulfillment.

### **Background of the study**

Modern novels have such great impacts on our cultural tradition that they almost become part of our thinking and cannot be removed from our cognitive process easily. One of these perspectives is the issue of feminism. Although feminism as a movement started later in the world, from the very beginning of society and literature, this tension could be felt, and both genders considered each other a hindrance in their way. Aristotle considered females subordinate to males due to a certain lack of qualities, and in the Greek trilogy Medea, the female character Medea considered herself most unfortunate and deprived of the pleasures of life because she was a female (Graebner,1992). Bahlieda (2015) argues that gender is not attached to biological foundations or bases, and therefore, gender boundaries can be breached.

Western culture is often seen as extreme patriarchal, with unequal power relations and male superiority. However, Canada and England, like other societies, had diverse gender and sexual roles in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These cultures reveal subversive signs and non-confirming identities within the patriarchal system (Bahlieda, 2015). Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory can be used to analyze the desires and sexual agency of female characters in literature, which challenge traditional gender roles and subvert patriarchal norms. This understanding helps understand the psychological journey of these characters and their subversion of patriarchal norms.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This study addresses the central problem of understanding and analyzing Gertrude Morel's rebellion against patriarchal expectations in D.H. Lawrence's novel Sons and

Lovers (1913). It explores the intricacies of her journey towards autonomy and self-fulfillment within the constraints of early 20th-century gender norms and societal expectations. Through a psycho-feminist lens, the research investigates how Gertrude negotiates her roles and challenges established gender norms, thereby shedding light on the complexities and consequences of such defiance. The study conducts a qualitative character analysis of Gertrude to unravel the nuances of her rebellion, examining the conflicts that emerge within her family as a result of her unconventional behavior and how it affects her relationships with her husband and children. In doing so, the research contributes to a broader discourse on the profound impact of gender roles on familial relationships and, more broadly, on the autonomy and agency of women within patriarchal societies.

#### **D.H. Lawrence and Sons and Lovers**

Lawrence was an English novelist, poet, essayist, literary critic, and painter born in 1885. His writing reflects the destructive effects of modernity and industrialization, emotional health issues, and societal pressures. Lawrence spent most of his life in exile, becoming known as a pornographer. He was praised for artistic integrity and moral seriousness in *The Sons and Lovers* which was also selected as one of the hundred best novels of all time.

D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, published in 1913, is a critically acclaimed work that explores gender perspectives in working-class life. It is considered autobiographical and highlights evolving societal attitudes towards gender perspectives and relationships. The novel, based on Lawrence's real life, highlights complex human relationships and marriage life, reflecting classical psychoanalytic literary theory and emphasizing the importance of relational ties for survival.

#### **Methodology**

The study involves a qualitative research approach that aims to investigate the text of the novel *Sons and Lovers*. The character selected for analysis in this context is Gertrude. Hence, the study uses a character analysis technique. The character analysis looks into the

complexities of Gertrude Morel's persona within the novel. It seeks to illuminate her rebellion against the prevailing patriarchal expectations and her pursuit of autonomy and self-fulfillment. The study explores Gertrude's rebellion against traditional gender roles and societal norms in the early 20th century. It uses a psycho-feminist lens to analyze her inner motivations, fears, and conflicts. The research also examines the repercussions of Gertrude's unconventional behavior on her family, particularly her interactions with her husband and children. The qualitative character analysis provides an understanding of Gertrude's character development, contributing to a broader discourse on the impact of gender roles on familial relationships and the broader societal implications of her rebellion.

### **Theoretical framework**

A feminist psychoanalytic approach based on the ideas of Simone de Beauvoir and Sigmund Freud offers a comprehensive approach to comprehending the portrayal of women as passive objects of desire. This framework underscores the notion that women who aspire to change their circumstances must confront the patriarchal subversion that perpetuates such representations.

Moreover, Beauvoir (1949) argue that women have always been defined in reference to males rather than as independent beings. Women are now subject to oppression and servitude as a result of being objectified and othered. She looked at how patriarchal structures, religion, and societal norms have contributed to the status of women as the "second sex". She emphasized the uncertainty of the presence of women. She stated that although society has given women a submissive and imitative position, they are capable of asserting themselves and making decisions for themselves. Both men and women should value their individuality and take charge of their own lives. Further, Freud's (1905) psychoanalytic theory, particularly the "male gaze" theory, explores how male viewers objectify women in visual media, highlighting societal norms and expectations that reinforce the notion of women as objects of desire.

While acknowledging the ubiquitous effect of patriarchal subversion, both theorists support the right of women to exercise their agency in questioning and altering these perceptions. Our grasp of how gender, desire, and societal factors connect in the production of female roles in cultural narratives and what wants float in their heads is enhanced by the junction of psychoanalysis and feminism.

### **Literature review**

This section of the study provides a brief literature review on D.H. Lawrence's novel *Sons and Lovers* and the criticism on women struggle for autonomy. D.H. Lawrence's novel 'Sons and Lovers,' published in 1913, has been the subject of extensive literary analysis over the years. It is a semi-autobiographical novel where women can be seen struggling for power in various ages.

Hi (1989) highlights the inward nature of women's sexuality and independence through Lawrence's portrayal of female characters. She argues that true happiness lies in women's liberation, as man cannot determine their path of happiness.

Swarnakar (1998) compares the unconventional female characters and changing patterns of sexualities in D.H. Lawrence and Jorge Amado's works, highlighting their sympathetic elements for women. He suggests that Lawrence's fiction may be misogynistic, but this view about struggle for powers by women needs to be spotlighted in the selected novel, *Sons and Lovers*.

In her article, Haque (2005) examines the novel's portrayal of women's attempts to realize themselves and their struggles against patriarchal traditions. She argues that Lawrence's portrayal of women in the novel is influenced by the feminist wave of the 1970s, which shifted focus from sex to gender issues.

Buchanan (2010) argues that the novel *Sons and Lovers* is the Freudian and psychoanalytic analysis of the characters. For instance, the protagonist, Paul Morel, can be viewed through a Freudian lens as he struggles with unresolved Oedipal conflicts, particularly his emotional attachment to

his mother. This analysis delves into the novel's exploration of the mother-son relationship.

Kriegl (2012) analyzes various opinions on gender and sexuality in D.H. Lawrence's works, focusing on the treatment of intersexual relationships, traditional roles of women, and power struggles between the sexes. He argues that Lawrence's work rejects cultural metaphysics that suppresses the body, otherness, and women, and that his characters often struggle with their patriarchal environment or choose radical ways to fight for freedom.

Pasari (2015) suggests that the relationship between men and women in Lawrence fiction presents conflict rather than harmony, and that possessive relations play a significant role in the development of human personality.

Lowe, & Lowe (2020) explores masculinity through adaptation and evolution, focusing on early models of masculinity and the importance of progress in gender roles. It also examines generational differences and social change related to masculinity, highlighting the need for sympathy, rationality, and intellectual equality among sexes, challenging outdated respect for birth order.

Anber (2023) explores the student's perspective toward the use of symbols in *Sons and Lovers*. He explores that Lawrence's first substantial novel, *Sons and Lovers* (1913), made him arguably the best young author of his period. In his writing, Lawrence adorned the articulation of his language with symbols. *Sons and Lovers*. The purpose of the study was to ascertain EFL students' perceptions of the employment of symbols in *Sons and Lovers*. To put it another way, the researcher wanted to know how much the EFL students agreed with the portrayal of the symbols used in the book? Did the author make excellent use of the symbols? Did the author's meaning come through in the symbols? successfully? The following inquiry was posed in order to provide answers to these concerns.

Bilal, et.al (2023) examined the psychological journey of Mr. and Mrs. Morel, the leading characters in D.H. Lawrence's novel *Sons and Lovers*. It uses Sigmund Freud's theoretical framework to examine the psychoanalytic

treatment of these characters and their relationship with their unconscious and conscious minds. The study reveals that Mrs. Moral, a pious Christian, responds differently to situations, while Mr. Morel, a beer addict, struggles with patience and unfair treatment. Both characters fall between opposite extremes.

Roy (2023) in his paper titled 'Finding Meaning in a Meaningless World: Existential Crisis of Paul Morel in DH Lawrence's Sons and Lovers' explores the characteristics of existential crises, focusing on Paul Morel's existential crisis after his mother's death. It uses Jean Paul Sartre's existential perspective and bad faith to understand Morel's crisis and conclude that human existential crises lead to a sense of meaninglessness, causing individuals to seek alternative ways of living that may be meaningful for themselves. The research aims to understand the ultimate existential crisis of Paul Morel.

### **A Psychoanalytic and Feminist Study of Female Character: Gertrude in Sons and Lovers**

The study examines female character, Gertrude who conflicts with social norms, their psychological motives, and attempts to maintain power within patriarchal society. It explores the nature of patriarchy, its causes, effects, and outcomes, and minimize conflict for social stabilization. A Psycho-Feminist concept is used to explore the portrayal of women as passive objects of male desire in patriarchal societies emphasizing power imbalances in the novel Sons and Lovers.

#### **a. Experiencing Frustration in Gertrude**

Freud claimed that humans have a 'death drive' that compels them to behave, both at individual as well as at collective level, in way that results in ultimate destruction of them (Smith,2020). Freud (1920) introduced the concept of the death drive as a negative term in opposition to the life drive: "The opposition between the ego or death instincts and the sexual or life instincts would then cease to hold and the compulsion to repeat would no longer possess the importance we have ascribed to it" (p. 44).

The human adopts a life style that is physically and emotionally destructive for them. Both females in selected novels adopted unconventional behavior which proved very fatal for themselves and the stabilization of their homes and relations and Gertrude's condition which was the outcome of her deeds is depicted in these words:

Gertrude's emotional detachment and cold behavior towards her family and husband do indeed play a significant role in the novel, contributing to the turmoil in her life and the strained relationships within her family. On another place she says Gertrude of the imaginary order, who suffers from a lack that marks her entire life— being a woman, perceives her womanhood as a hindrance to her progress and development. She clearly states this in a dialogue with Field: “If I were a man, nothing would stop me” (Lawrence,1977, p.28).

Gertrude, a woman who views her womanhood as her enemy, aspires to be a man, seeking self-fulfillment and independence. Her struggle with patriarchal societal norms leads to conflicts within her family, particularly with her husband, Walter Morel. Gertrude's frustration and anger, expressed through physical violence, ultimately cause more turmoil in her marriage. The revelation of Walter's drinking habits, which she reveals to her washer-woman, further complicates the situation. The washing-woman's actions symbolize the shattering of Gertrude's dreams due to Walter's drinking. The revelation of the truth was followed by silence suggests the silencing of Walter in Gertrude's life— in other words, her absenting him from her life. She needed to silence him in her life because their “relation [is] of utter interdistrict” (Lawrence,1977, p. 213).

Gertrude, a character in early 20th-century England, represents the challenges women faced in challenging traditional norms and asserting independence. Her behavior, resembling a man, shocked her husband and threatened his masculinity. Novel, under her supervision, tried to mold her husband's habits, shocking him. Both women suffered due to their struggle for social authority, affecting their homes and men's mentality. Gertrude's fight



with her husband demonstrates this complexity as he was stunned as responded it “Yer non-want her make a wench on `I`m`, Morel said in a frightened tone, bending his head to shield his eyes from hers. His attempt at laughter had vanished (Lawrence,1977, p. 25).

According to Freud, the frequency of the confliction in human history is an obvious indication of the presence of Thanatos at collective level. And genders are mostly in conflicting terms either for sufferings or to ensure opposite gender sufferings. He also points out that the glorification attached with the wars shows that it is something that is ingrained in humanity’s biological and psychological make-up and probably both selected women were compelled by their nature to fight for enhancing their social image and establishing their glory but unfortunately upcoming result did not favor them. The description of that attempt for the achievement of honor and glory and Gertrude preparation for upcoming expedition is given by Margaret Lawrence in *The Novel* in the following words, “I had only one thought-I’d had so many things to say to him, so many things to put to right” (Lawrence,1977, p.216).

The glorification of the struggle for getting prominent status and the honor accorded to the liberation fighters is so prevalent in the human psyche that the protagonist of the novels laments their inability to get over others and participate in the heroic deeds; the deeds which are the reasons for respecting an individual in that society. Protagonist frustration is illustrated by D.H. Lawrence that, “She said very little to her husband, but her manner had changed towards him. Something in her proud, honorable soul had crystallized out hard as rock” (Lawrence,1977, p.17).

#### **b. The Burden of Unbroken Bonds: Alienation and Struggle in the Lives of Gertrude**

The above-mentioned chains are the bonding ties which connected Novel with her relations and society but unfortunately, she shackled every tie and left her betraying in a wilderness which snatched the pleasures of her life. Gertrude also tried to maintained a mask of pride which ultimately created a gap in her relations but both women

were unaware from the strategies of bridging this gap of relation and separated themselves from bonding ties apparently or inwardly. Novel was alienated from her close ties more intensively as compared to Gertrude because Gertrude separated herself from others physically and Gertrude emotionally. Both were apparently strong but possessed weaknesses of common human beings as D. H. Lawrence mentioned about Gertrude that She was one of those women who cannot cry ;who mit hurts as it hurts a man and it was like a ripping something out of her soul ( Lawrence,1977,p.25).

She remained in the state of constant struggle either with their internal state of discomfort or with other external forces and this continuous process of struggle with both forces entangled them so intensively that both developed a sense of extreme burden over themselves, and they considered patriarchal forces responsible for it. This struggle kept them involved mentally in a burdensome task and their sense of loss widened with the passage of time.

In the novel *Sons and Lovers*, Gertrude and Mrs. Morel, two radical feminists, engage in a war against patriarchal society due to the abduction of their rights and self-image by patriarchal forces. Their uncompromising nature, rather than suppression from masculine forces, leads to their fight against the stability of their homes. The fight between the couple is depicted as more inward fear of Mr. Morel than Mrs. Morel. The only convincing explanation for this situation is Sigmund Freud's theory of the existence and influence of the death drive in humans. This influence creates a sense of insecurity in Gertrude, who seeks security by examining her past actions and losing hope from those around her.

The death drive also can be seen at work when Gertrude is engaged in emotional and hasty decisions in making relationship with other men, particularly with their husbands during their adulthood, despite the fact that their nature, social status and expectations were extremely in juxtaposition with them. And it was this hasty and emotional involvement with their husbands that antagonizes their family members and they decide to kill

the relation with their husbands. Their detachment occurs as a result of their emotional violation of their husband's feelings as they never respond their feelings and acted with them like stones, as says about her husband that "his banner over me was only his own skin, and I no longer know why it should have shamed me. People thought of things differently in those days. Perhaps some people didn't. I wouldn't know. I never spoke of it to anyone" (Lawrence,1977, p.81)

### **c. Gertrude's Defiance**

Gertrude is 'wronging their close relations with paramours at celebrated societal norms shows Thanatos or death drive at work in them. Gertrude's stubbornness, pride and unconventional behavior were great causes of her and her family's unhappiness. Due to her stubbornness Gertrude didn't find true love in her life. When her father and Lottie said that he was, "as common as dirt" (Lawrence,1977, p.48) she refused to compromise with the real situation. Her father again tries to explain that, "there's not a decent girl in this town would wed without her family's consent...It's not done" (49). Then with her stubborn and arrogant way she replied, "It'll be done by me" (49). After her marriage with Bram, her and her father stopped speaking and her marriage with Bram ended with their separation due to rigid principles of her life. As Gertrude got older, she needed more care. Gertrude's daughter-in-law, Doris was always trying to help her, but Gertrude was unwilling to allow anyone help her out: "Leave me, leave me be—" (p.31). Even when Marvin tried helping, she would just decline and reply with cold way, "I can manage quite well, thank- you... go on now for pity's sake" (p.33). When Doris and Marvin suggested putting Gertrude in an old age home, she refused, "I won't go there... The two of you can move out. Go ahead and move right now" (p.57). Her behavior and attitude with other suggest that she is sick of others and her sickness is the product of her frustration.

In the end, Gertrude's stubbornness killed her but before it she realized her mistakes. The nurse in the hospital tried to help her drinking water but Gertrude felt that she could

do it on her own, she was wrong. "I only defeat myself for not accepting her. I know this- I know this very well. But I can't help it- it's my nature... I'd think her daft, and push her hands away, certain I could hold it for her better... I hold it in my hands. There. There. And then-" (Lawrence,1977, p.308).

#### **d. Gertrude's Unconventional Behavior, Family Struggles, and the Fear of Femininity**

Gertrude's unconventional behavior got in the way of her and her family's happiness and destroyed her and the lives of those she cared about. Gertrude's fear of weakness is shown with her brother Dan's death and it was also the product of her frustration with her mother and to avoid femininity like her mother she began to negate existing systems to prove her power over them as Gertrude's attitudes to her parents: She favoured her mother, loved her mother best of all; but she had the Coppards' clear, defiant blue eyes and their broad brow. She remembered to have hated her father's overbearing manner towards her gentle, humorous, kindly-souled mother. (Lawrence,1977, p. 7). Matt realizes that their dying and delirious brother wants to see their mother. He asks Gertrude to wear her old shawl and to comfort Dan. Gertrude refuses, remembering what she has heard about her mother's meekness and frailty—qualities she detests her way of life. At age eight, Gertrude has chosen her father's steeliness and determination and behaved like human being devoid of feelings and emotions.

#### **e. Gertrude's Lifelong Struggle for Freedom and the Elusive Redemption**

As Gertrude reflects in her final hours of her life, we notice her say: "I lie here and try to recall something truly free that I have done in 90 years," admitting that these two "acts" as she thinks them ("a joke and a lie") are the only moments of release from the bondage of her pride, that can remember, actions which ironically bless but with only words, and which sacrifice what, for all her tenacity, she could no longer keep. Gertrude's spirit never obtains its psychic release and conversion would involve a submission to reason because she cannot countenance: "Ought I to

appeal? It's the one thing. Our Father – no. I want no part of that. All I can thing is – Bless me or not, Lord, just as you please, for I'll not beg"(Lawrence,1977, p. 307).

In *Sons and Lovers*, Gertrude and Elva Jar Dine are separated from their close relationships, leading to feelings of alienation and lack of attachment. They act as sacrifices to appease themselves and gain a favorable wind through pleasure principles. Their actions are influenced by various motivational factors, such as attacking patriarchal notions to secure independence and honorability. However, when their husbands act differently from their will, they develop mixed feelings of love and hate. Gertrude realizes her mistake in her final days and expresses her love towards her son, Marvin. Elva Jar Dine serves as a model, illustrating philo, Eros, and self-sacrificing love as stages in acceptance. Gertrude imitates Elva's self-sacrificing act and acknowledges her son's attempts to stabilize his relationship, demonstrating her commitment to her family.

The psychic condition of both Gertrude when they developed sense of being deprived by masculine traditions is not easy to describe due to the complexity of emotions and impulses involved. It can best be described as ambivalent; though the deception endeavors to conceal their mixed feelings but through some actions of both females the glimpses of it is apparent as Chastised by her father, Gertrude says "I wouldn't let him see me cry. I was so outraged. .... He looked at my eyes in a kind of fury, as though he'd failed unless he drew water from them" (Lawrence, 1977, p.9).

#### **f. Gertrude's Complex Emotions and the Struggle Against Patriarchy**

In D.H. Lawrence's novel, Gertrude is a complex character with mixed emotions towards her husband, Paul. Her ambivalence stems from her love for her mother and fears about his relationships. Gertrude sacrifices her marriage to her father, Bram, for egotistical satisfaction. Despite her ambivalence, she eventually realizes the importance of good relationships and happiness. Both women's psychological makeups are influenced by family pride and

control. She maximizes their revolt against patriarchal forces, losing control over their men and respecting masculinity. As she realizes, being a man is not everything. (Lawrence, 1977, p.14).

Gertrude is an arrogant, proud, and haughty woman who seeks independence and are not satisfied with masculine forces. They are anti-patriarchal and strive to make their status supreme. Analyzing their complex personalities through psychoanalytic critical theory is complex due to various psychological forces. Gertrude's decision to sacrifice her close relatives was motivated by her unconscious desire to retain her status as a powerful force and authority over her husbands and homes. (Lawrence, 1977, p.36).

Gertrude's decision to sacrifice her close relations was motivated by her unconscious desire to retain her status as an unmatched powerful forces and authority over her husbands and homes. She wanted to demonstrate that she is capable of leading her homes, as she can sacrifice anything for the cause, including her own close relation and family members.

#### **g. Gertrude's Struggle with Masculine Power and Oedipal Complex**

Gertrude is a complex female character who struggles with masculine image and power, leading to disappointment in controlling their lives. Their relationships with men reveal an Oedipal fixation, with Gertrude avoiding sexual relationships with girls, leading to unconscious guilt and John's death. This Oedipal reading of Paul's attachment to his mother results in tragic outcomes. (Lawrence, 1977, p.22).

John and Paul attempt to convince their mothers to stay away from women, but both women view it as an attack on their ego. John's attempt to negate her mother's decision leads to his death, while Paul's emotional slavery creates a bridge between him and other women, leading to his actions of killing his mother. Psychoanalysis reveals defense mechanisms in characters like Gertrude, who face disappointment in controlling their lives and affairs.

William's departure for London leaves Mrs. Morel saddened., she thought of him. He was in London; he would do well. Almost, he was like her knight who wore her favor in the battle."(Lawrence, 1977, p. 1, ch 4)

In psychoanalysis, defense mechanisms are prone to deny their existence and conceal themselves when external agents try to prove their existence. The dialogues show the eventual yielding of outer forces, particularly masculinity, in the novel.

#### **h. Gertrude's Complex Relationship with Masculine Power**

The irony of a powerful female character being put in a helpless situation by hostile forces suggests a mistake in their strategy. Both women are driven by their unconscious struggle to present themselves as a powerful force, securing enough strength to control others' lives. Their deep-rooted fears and guilt for undermining social norms influence their behavior, making them vulnerable to emotional blackmail. Their strong will to undermine opposing forces perplexes them and attacks traditional masculine pride. Adopting violent attitudes towards opposite gender results in mental and physical disturbance. As she is in the room in which she is lying in hospital, at night is "dark and deep" while sheliess "like a lump at the bottom of it" (Lawrence,1977, p. 298).

Gertrude's decision to engage in rivalry in Sons and Lovers undermines patriarchal values and affects the emotional growth of family members. This decision is influenced by unconscious desires for power, which are evident in both writers' descriptions of conflict and quarrels in homes. Gertrude's confrontation with Walter Morel, despite acknowledging his hardships, leads to a loss of respect for his masculinity. Walter's lie about his expectations destroys his masculine image in his wife's eyes, highlighting the influence of unconscious motives on women's decisions. Her sense of superiority was depicted through their sense of having good command over language, as Gertrude neglected son, Marvin, faithfully writes each month from the West coast, her only response is the complaint that

"his letters were always very poorly spelled"(Lawrence,1977, p.130).

### **i. Gertrude's Struggle for Identity, Love, and Justice**

Gertrude is who has: Conscious feelings of rivalry and claims to superiority over many of the "father- figures" whose favor she would then woo after her own performances .... and (in private) [who] would reject the idea of being subject to their judgment or criticism. (Lawrence,1977, p.37) is a captive, a stranger, and unaware of her own need. Her battle with arrogance, disobedience, and their rejection of love.

Her strict moral sensibilities are a result of their Presbyterian and Catholic upbringing. She struggles with family alienation while seeking justice through patriarchal customs. She finds it difficult to place blame or guilt on their family members, which disrupts their social lives. In her introduction, Margaret Laurence describes herself as a writer whose destiny is to develop character.

### **Discussion**

Gertrude Morel's quest for autonomy and empowerment is a complex and multifaceted journey that reflects the broader societal changes and challenges faced by women during her time. Her character serves as a lens through which D.H. Lawrence explores themes of gender roles, societal expectations, and the price of pursuing individuality in a society that often suppresses women's desires and aspirations. Gertrude's story is a poignant portrayal of the struggle for independence and self-realization in a world marked by rigid gender norms.

Gertrude Morel, a central character in the novel, embodies a woman with deep aspirations and desires for her children. She seeks to provide them with better lives than her own and often finds herself living vicariously through them. Her character serves as a reflection of the struggles faced by women in a society characterized by rigid gender roles and societal expectations. Gertrude yearns for a world where women can experience greater freedom and break free from the constraints imposed by traditional masculinity.



The analysis suggests that both Gertrude and the author's real-life mother share a common quest for an ideal world where their dreams and desires can be realized without the limitations imposed by societal norms. However, this pursuit of an ideal world often leads to tension and instability within their families, as their conscious efforts to provide for their children clash with their unconscious desires for more fulfilling lives.

Furthermore, the analysis highlights that departing from their accustomed way of life is necessary for these women to achieve a sense of family immortality. Breaking away from societal norms and expectations allows them to transcend the limitations of their time and establish enduring, meaningful connections with their children.

In *Sons and Lovers*, these themes are explored through the intricate relationships between Gertrude Morel and her sons, particularly her son Paul. The novel delves deep into the psychological complexities of these characters as they grapple with the pursuit of happiness and fulfillment in a world that often suppresses their desires and aspirations. Gertrude's evolving perception of the ideal man, indicating that her understanding of this concept has shifted significantly over time. Despite these changes, elements of her old perception still influence her, suggesting an "imprinting" of the new view with the old one. This imprinting is attributed to her past experiences and ideals, particularly her relationship with John Field.

Gertrude's continued attachment to John Field's memory, as well as her fondness for Mr. Heaton, a Congregational clergyman with certain similarities to John Field, underscores the enduring impact of her past experiences on her perception of ideal manhood. This highlights the complexity of her character and the lasting influence of past relationships on her understanding of masculinity and idealized figures.

In *Sons and Lovers*, Gertrude Morel's character illustrates themes related to women's empowerment and autonomy in the context of societal norms and expectations. Throughout the novel, Gertrude's actions and struggles

reflect her desire for independence and her battle against traditional gender roles.

This is evident in several aspects. Gertrude, a coal miner's wife, rebels against the social norms of her time. She refuses to conform to the traditional roles assigned to women, seeking a life beyond the domestic sphere. This rebellion is an early indicator of her pursuit of autonomy. Her distorts her image to satisfy her ego and ambitions. She wants more than what society expects of her as a wife and mother, which drives her to assert herself and challenge established norms. Her desire for independence is a central theme. She yearns for a world where women can breathe freely and break free from the restrictions imposed by masculinity. This longing reflects her aspiration for autonomy. Her battle against patriarchal customs is a manifestation of her pursuit of empowerment. She challenges the authority and dominance of male figures in her life, particularly her husband, Walter Morel. Her unconventional behavior and resistance to traditional roles lead to conflicts within her family. Her struggles for autonomy disrupt the stability of her home, affecting her relationships with her husband and children. Her emotional detachment from her family members, especially her husband, contributes to the turmoil in her life. Her inability to connect emotionally with them reflects her desire for independence and self-fulfillment.

### **Conclusion**

From the analysis, it is evident that Gertrude Morel's character in *Sons and Lovers* embodies the theme of women's empowerment and autonomy. Her rebellion against traditional gender roles, desire for independence, and struggles against patriarchal customs are central elements of her character. Her complex portrayal reflects the challenges faced by women in early 20th-century society as they sought to assert themselves and break free from societal constraints.

Gertrude's pursuit of autonomy and her actions may be driven by unconscious desires. Her ambition to be like a man and her unconventional behavior may be influenced by deeper psychological motives. Her character is complex

and multidimensional. She is portrayed as a woman who defies societal norms but also grapples with internal conflicts and ambivalence, which adds depth to her character. The idea that women like Gertrude can achieve a sense of family immortality by departing from their accustomed form of life signifies her pursuit of autonomy, can lead to lasting connections with their children.

The study explores the novel *Sons and Lovers* by D.H. Lawrence, focusing on the characters Gertrude and Walter Morel and their struggles within their marriage. It explores the concept of Thanatos, or the death drive, and how Gertrude's actions and behaviors are manifestations of this self-destructive force. Gertrude is portrayed as a complex character with mixed emotions, rebelling against social norms and societal expectations. Her unconscious desires and guilt shape her behavior, leading to conflict and alienation. The study suggests that Gertrude and "Novel" seek an idealized world, but their pursuit leads to chaos and instability.

The study also explores that Gertrude's journey towards autonomy and empowerment is marked by both successes and failures. While she strives to break free from societal norms and assert her independence, her efforts are often met with challenges and obstacles. Her successes lies in her quest for autonomy is her ability to maintain a sense of self and identity despite the constraints of her time and the oppressive nature of traditional gender roles. She refuses to conform to the expectations placed upon women and seeks to live life on her own terms. This can be seen in her determination to provide a better life for her children and her refusal to accept a life of mediocrity. Her pursuit of self-fulfillment and independence represents a form of empowerment.

However, Gertrude also faces significant failures and setbacks in her pursuit of autonomy. Her intense desire for her children's success and happiness often leads to an overbearing and controlling nature, which strains her relationships with them. Her attempts to mold their lives according to her own ideals result in conflicts and resentment, particularly with her son Paul. Her inability to

let go and allow her children to make their own choices undermines her efforts to achieve true autonomy

Gertrude's romantic relationships with men, such as her failed marriage with Walter Morel and her emotional entanglements with other men, do not lead to the kind of empowerment and autonomy she seeks. Instead, these relationships often bring about further complexities and emotional turmoil in her life.

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