



# Sons and Lovers: A Reflection of Gothic Entity in a Modernist Novel

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**Abstract**—Modernism relates to the reality of modern life and the elite identity human beings hold as the most creative beings. On the other hand, gothic refers to the unusual imaginations and the uncanny aspects of human attributes, events and sexuality. This paper is a research on the representation of the gothic entities of a modernist novel *Sons and Lovers* by D.H. Lawrence. Through the love relationships, Oedipus complex, contradictions of gender and representation of sexual desires, the novel explores the gothic reality of human minds and body. This research presents that gothic aspect of the modernist novel through qualitative research portraying the facts and notions of the events and characters sketched by Lawrence.

**Keywords**—gothic, modernist, reality, imaginations

## I. INTRODUCTION

Novels and Literatures are written in different genres and styles. Each genre has certain dimension or characteristics that separate one from other. Gothic fiction, originated from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, is a kind of genre that combines fiction with horror, death and romance. Modernism on the other hand, is a movement or theory that refers to a practice, an attitude, a usage, an expression, a way of thinking, a way of living, etc. that is connected to the characteristic of modern times. Modernism, in its broadest definition, is modern thought, character, or practice. More concretely, the term is a symbol of modernist movement, its set of cultural tendencies and array of associated cultural movements, that brought a huge amount of changes in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Gothic elements are certainly rare in modernist texts as literary modernism is organized by a very self-conscious break with traditional ways of writing, in both poetry and prose. Gothic and modernism has a connection and that has not been given much importance as gothic was full of appealing imagination while modernism was related to realistic elite discussions. But the discourse came to light as Andrew Smith and Jeff Wallace wrote their book *Gothic Modernisms*[1] connecting the two sides of literature in one page.

The book *Sons and lovers*[2] is a good example of modernist literature as it contains complicated human relationships, Oedipus complex, contradictions, bondage, industrialization etc. D. H. Lawrence, being a modernist writer was not likely to be an epitome of gothic literature but the way he portrayed fascination with the body has to do both a Gothic Language of otherness and a modernist discourse of subjectivity [1]. The pseudo-scientific ideas related to degeneration gives a notion of gothic exploration

that was a popular eminent at that time. In the novel *Sons and Lovers* D.H. Lawrence have used theories of degeneracy which provides links to the gothic perception from 19-20<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time, the perversion and decadence leads to the modern culture of associations. Therefore, the novel *Sons and Lovers*, even in a shadowy form of gothic attributes give the essence of modernism and gothic in the similar platform. Hence, this paper is a research on the development of the idea of gothic modernism and its influence in the novel *Sons and Lovers* by D.H. Lawrence [2].

### Statement of the Problem

Gothic fictions, being 18<sup>th</sup> century concept, was not much applied in the modern style of writing or in true sense not observed by the critics according to the average definition of gothics. The novel *Sons and Lovers* by D.H. Lawrence is a novel that overpowered modernist view of human relationship through Oedipus complex. But the novel also contained gothic elements that gave rise to emotions that are absurd and full of surprises. Hence the problem of the research to connect the gothic with the modernism in the novel.

### Significance of the Study

Literatures have always been in a form of gyre and styles of one era overlaps or get connected to styles of other regularly. Though it may seem one style cannot be a part of another it is not correct. Modernists have put forward huge amount new perceptions and theories relates to certain ideologies of life. In the meantime the thrilling avatars of nonfictions that come in wrappings of gothics were not found much. But researched in explicit way, the gothic settings in the human complexities could be found and that should be understood. In Lawrence's writing he have portrayed complex human psychology, absurd

imaginings and certain horrific notions of human behavior which are both terms of modernism and gothic but only termed under modernist views. The significance of this paper is to bring out the gothic notions of modernist phases of the novel *Sons and Lovers* which is undermined in bigger analysis.

### Research Objectives

- a) To understand the detailed function of gothic fictions other than horror, fear and supernatural.
- b) To understand the aspects of modernism in the novel *Sons and Lovers* by D.H. Lawrence.
- c) To connect the gothic features of a modernist novel understanding the relatable features of both kind.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In general studies and definitions, gothic fictions are assumed to be horrific, full of terror, absurd settings and supernatural incidents and so on. "Gothic fiction as a way of proclaiming modernity through the aesthetic containment of the past which is now seen as being guided by gullibility and unreason" [3]. In deeper sense, the intensities of human relations, explicit exploration of human body, etc. are also matters to gothic literature. "When we think of the Gothic, we typically think of drafty castles, frightened but virtuous heroines, forbidding forests, ghouls, ghosts, family curses, and vampires. A great body of work has accumulated regarding the symbolism of these things, mostly of the cultural criticism variety that seeks to tell us what these things represented in society" [4]. Detailed expression of body parts of human beings are crucial elements to Gothic as well [5]. On the other hand, "modernism designates a broad literary and cultural movement that spanned all of the arts and even spilled into arts and philosophy" [6]. Modernism centers on certain facts like sexual explicitness, feelings of apocalypse, complicity of human relations and so on. Absurdity of human minds and relations to the extreme level is a notion of modern literatures.

D.H. Lawrence in his novel *Sons and Lovers* intentionally or not, have given elements of both gothic and modernism. Though gothic and modernism playing in the same field is not a common scenario, the placement can happen and Lawrence has showed that. "The connections between modernism and gothic have largely been overlooked in studies of gothic and modernist scholarship. Given the gothic's appeal to the mass readership, and modernisms association to elite culture, such oversights seem initially justifiable" [1]. As gothic seems centering to the notions of ghosts, vampires and similar aspects, Lawrence's attributes in his novel connects to the fact in a way because "Vampire resurrections, ghostly visitations, occur for Lawrence when the personal will to love or to hate pushes one's being over its body's borders, even past the borders of the kingdom of death, towards the world, or another, in the striving to merge, unify, dominate, subsume otherness with oneself, or oneself with otherness" [7].

The complex relationship of mother and son was also a matter of presentation of modernist vibe with gothic presentation. "In *Sons and Lovers*, the oedipal novel, author describes his youth, dwelling on his relationship with his mother and the problematic bond she cultivated between herself and her son, a bond which is presented in the novel as a source of great confusion and pain for the hero of the story, young Paul Morel, especially regarding his sexuality" [8]. Lawrence has given the explicit attributes of body parts which are important for gothic elements as mentioned before. "Early within the novel, he describes a pregnant Mrs. Morel, mother of the protagonist, Paul. He notes how Mrs. Morel did not know what she thought. Except for a slight feeling of sickness, and her consciousness in the child, herself melted out like scent into the shiny, pale air. After a time the child, too, melted with her in the mixing-pot of moonlight, and she rested with the hills and lilies and houses, all swum together in a kind of swoon" [9]. Here, the expression of Mrs. Morel's feeling for her child seemed so intense that it gives sensations of terror to the readers. An expression of modernist style here is giving gothic feeling. Furthermore, the detailing of Clara's body was both of a sexual implication in gothic style as explained when "Lawrence reveals the protagonist Paul's visual perspective of his love interest Clara, noting 'he saw the nape of her white neck, he noticed how her breasts swelled inside her blouse, and how her shoulder curved handsomely under the thin muslin at the top of her arm'" [9]. Overall, the bodily expression of human body and degeneration of human minds with complicate relationship formulates the gothic with the modernism aspect and these are found by the research of many.

## III. METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on qualitative method of research hence no interview or calculative data collection has been followed. The text *Sons and Lovers* by D.H. Lawrence worked as the primary data and secondary data were accumulated from relevant books, blogs, research articles, journals etc. The secondary data were analyzed based on the subject matter, theme and perspectives of the research evaluating them with a comparative approach of study subjected to the prevalent primary literature.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The modernism and gothic are two separate theories and style of literature that rarely connect. But in literature, it is always evident that styles are co-related and aspects are connected in some way or other. Gothic fiction is commonly the genre of horror, absurdity and supernatural that does not actually connect to the elite realism and materialistic approaches of modern literature. "Modernism in literature stressed upon the idea of individuality, the innerself and consciousness" (Singh, p. 1) [10]. Basically, the outlook of the people mattered in modernism that worked mostly with real life effects. Though it is said that modernism has started in 1914 from the time of First

World War, in his essay *Rethinking Modernism*, Lynn Pykett argues that there is no fixed date and time when modernism began. According to her, "Modernism is variously an aesthetic program, a self-conscious artistic movement, a retrospective descriptive category, a way of periodizing literary history and or a means of constructing a canon of value. The moment of modernism is thus difficult to fix" [11].

In *Sons and Lovers* by D.H Lawrence certain aspects of modernism is seen through unconventional human relationships, Oedipus complex, industrialism, contradictions and many other. In the novel, the relationship between the mother and son Mrs. Morel and Paul seems unconventional in many ways. Mrs. Morel is very weak for her sons and that is normal but the sexual desires they have in the context of parent children increases the intensity of complex human mind. The Oedipus complex of Paul as a matter of fact that he developed sexual attractions towards her is a very modern aspect of thinking and explaining human psychology which was done by Sigmund Freud. The relationships of Paul with other ladies like Miriam and Clara also explains outburst of carnal attraction and illegitimate relationship. These complexities of human relations increase the bursting notion of insecurity and absurdity in modern times. Paul for the love of his mother fantasizes his father's death and also feels guilty about that. The guilt then turns him to express his lust on other ladies. On the other hand, Mrs. Morel brings about sexual desires for her husband and son at the same time and despised the ladies who are in relation with Paul. These circumstances create much obscurity to readers about human minds and approaches. Furthermore, the contradictions in the human minds that give modernistic approach is seen in the characters of the novel. The characters like Paul and his mother is seen to have love and hatred for same persons. When love and hate both stays in a relationship at the same time, the expressions become indistinguishable and complex. Paul loves the ladies in his life and at the same time hates them too. Also he feels guilty for wanting his father's death and craves for that too. Mrs. Morel loves her husband and again hates him for being wall between her and Paul. So these relationship criteria's bring about a huge amount of tensions and extreme modernist views about life and relationships. Industrialization as an aspect of modern times is present in the novel *Sons and Lovers*. The mining company, the dreary monotonous life of people, class diversion, quest of earning men etc. sought after the notions of industrialization in the novel.

As a matter of fact gothic novels are said to be horrors and absurdity in nature but certain reviews prove that the absurd human behavior, the complex thoughts of men and the bodily representations also explain gothic. Hence the complexities of human relations and explicit sexual attributes of human minds that portray modernistic views normally can also provide gothic perception in a broader sense. The Oedipus complex itself is a gothic element in a novel. The sexual desire for parents by a son is terrifying

in normal human attribute. Sexual relation is very intense and visualization of sexual desire gives cringe and physical terror to some extent. And when the situation is imagines about a mother and a son it generates fear or absurd disgust to readers. The mother son relationship that has been pictured in the novel is very unreal in simple human affairs. The vision of carnal lust and the despised attitude of the mother in the novel create fear in relationships of human beings. These attributes are degeneration of human ethics and morality. This degeneration is an element of gothic that relates with the string of modernism. The degeneration of Paul having lust for his mother, killing attitude for father and no certain affection for ladies in his life give outrageous views on him. The fact that he imagined his father's death for having physical bond with his mother certainly raises terror in minds of the readers.

The expressive views on the human body and extreme expression of physical relation also create gothic imaginations to the readers. Lawrence presents sensations and emotions in conflict because physical experience is complex. Paul notes of Miriam: 'if she put her arm in his, it caused him almost torture. His consciousness seemed to split. The place where she was touching him ran hot with friction'[9]. Also details about Clara's body parts and Mrs. Morel's sensation for her baby gave the explicit view of modernism and gothic in the same page. Therefore it can be seen in Lawrence's work; gothic elements place themselves atrociously in the circumstances of modern views. On other level, most of aspects of modernism give gothic sterns and notions as they raise the intensity of human thinking and tremble the day to day views. In this novel, through outburst of complexities in human relations different modern theories could be explained and as well the new approaches created surprise and unreal feelings about normal relations that gave gothic features to life and arenas. Hence gothic modernism is a shadowy yet fruitful aspect to know and own in the context of novels.

## V. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE SCOPE

The novels of modern times give the fascination of unreal context regarding human relationships. Modernism is expressed in them through the class division, industrialization, and modern outlook of contexts, new writing stylistics, and complex relationships and so on. In midst of all these the gothic entities are not really recognized though they are firmly hidden in the aspects. Modernism contemplates modern views and gothic fictions generate surprise, horror and cringe feelings regarding supernatural or unreal aspects. Normally critics do not recognize gothic in modern projections but closely notified the modern texts also give certain gothic spells that cannot be rebounded. In the novel *Sons and Lovers* by D.H. Lawrence, the projection of mother son relationships, atrocities of dangerous imaginations by Paul, explicit projection of lust and physical relationship etc. give notions about modern aspects and gothic entity at the same time. Apart from all the notions of modernism in the novel

like class struggle, industrialization, modern working quest, earning facilities and so on, the notion of love, death, romances etc., generates gothic persuasions. The Oedipus complex by Freud that explains mother son relationship is modern as well as surprising that root to gothic sensations. The father killing attitude, the love and hate contradictions, the fall of human ethics, the devastation of broken relationships etc. diverse to new aspects of human psychology and also generates horror of a certain kind. Also explicit use of word to elaborate sensual emotions and body parts creates much intensities of gothic in the novel. Hereafter in this paper it has been researched and elaborates how D.H. Lawrence being a modernist writer incorporated gothic abilities and aspirations in modernist text and upheld the notion of Gothic modernism in the novel *Sons and Lovers*.

### COMPETING INTERESTS

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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