An Anthropocene Ecofeminist Reading of D. H. Lawrence's *The Prussian Officer and Other Stories*

Terry Gifford

(published in *Short Fiction in Theory & Practice*, Special Section: 'The Short Story and Ecology', 14:1 (2024), pp. 41–55)

Anthropocene Ecofeminism

It could be argued that D. H. Lawrence thought of himself as writing during what we now call the Anthropocene. He did not, of course, think of this as the geological era exhibiting various traces of human activity – soot, toxins, radioactive isotopes - first proposed by Paul Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer in 2000, although we cannot avoid reading his work from our present position in the Anthropocene. He called his the 'coal age' (Lawrence 2013: 604) and he recognised that a human culture fired by coal made possible not only the structures of class, power and money markets in which he lived, but the horrors of self-destruction embodied by the First World War and its aftermath. At the heart of all his writings there is an awareness, however implicit at times, that the ultimate self-destruction of our species would come about through a breakdown in our relationship with the environment that is our home. In a draft his last work, known as *Apocalypse II*, he wrote:

> Man has made an enormous mistake. Mind is not a Ruler, mind is only an instrument […] these men of mind and spirit […] only succeed in spoiling the earth, spoiling life, and in the end destroying mankind […]. Man cannot destroy the cosmos: that is obvious. But it is obvious that the cosmos can destroy man. Man must inevitably destroy himself, in conflict with the cosmos. It is perhaps his fate. (Lawrence 1980: 199-200)

Lawrence's attacks on materialism, money and mechanisation, and the hubris of the human assumption of domination over nature, can now be acknowledged as Lawrence's anger at a still developing cosmic environmental crisis that is also a cultural crisis – the culture of the 'Ruler'. 'Perhaps we have chosen suicide', Lawrence wondered in the final version of his last work (Lawrence 1980: 148).

In 1929, the year before he died, Lawrence's *Apocalypse II* shows that he believed that this crisis – this 'enormous mistake' - was a result of an unresolved tension in human consciousness between mind and body, between Logos and intuition, between domination of nature and being 'in touch' with the cosmos:

> Man, poor man, has to learn to function in these two ways of consciousness. When a man is *in touch*, he is non-mental, his mind is quiescent, his bodily centres are active. When a man's *mind* is active in real mental activity, the bodily centres are quiescent, switched off, the man is out of touch. The animals remain always in touch. (Lawrence 1980: 199)

In this draft Lawrence concludes with pessimism for the future of our species that anticipates our current anxieties in the Anthropocene:

> The triumph of Mind over the cosmos progresses in small spasms: aeroplanes, radio, motor-traffic […] And alas, everything has gone wrong. The destruction of the world seems not very far off, but the happiness of mankind has never been so remote. (Lawrence 1980: 199)

But the final words of the posthumously published version of *Apocalypse* encourage a means of getting back 'in touch' with the cosmos: 'Start with the sun, and the rest will slowly, slowly happen' (Lawrence 1980: 149). Indeed, three late stories do just that: *Sun*, 'The Princess' and 'The Woman Who Rode Away' each engage with the sun in literal and symbolic ways, although what slowly happens in each story is very different.

It is significant that, of the sixteen papers in the special edition of the journal *Études Lawrenciennes 53: D. H. Lawrence and the Anticipation of the Ecocritical Turn*, none make refence to Lawrence's short fiction. Indeed, the editor of the *Journal of D. H. Lawrence Studies* recently admitted that her journal, like others, had neglected the short stories (Reid 2023: 131). This is a neglect of which I have myself been guilty. Only in the final chapter of my book *D. H. Lawrence, Ecofeminism and Nature* (2023) titled 'Ecofeminism in the Anthropocene', is space found to argue that the three late short stories that 'start with the sun' exemplify what might be summarised as 'the sun discovered; the sun lost; the sun restored' (Gifford 2023: 166). The women at the centre of these tales demonstrate, in narratives that have each proved problematic for readers, different modes and degrees of being 'in touch' with the cosmos they consciously set out to explore (Lawrence 1995: 23). Indeed, the gender tensions in these tales arise as a direct result of their conceptions of their explorations of the natural world. To use Lawrence's terminology, their minds frame their quests to get 'in touch' with consequences for their encounters with the male presences in the stories. But it is their different inner natures that lead to the different outcomes of the stories. In all three tales women embark on journeys that ultimately lead inwards through their engagement with their outer environment. This Lawrence called 'sense-knowledge' - 'a great depth of knowledge arrived at direct, by instinct and intuition, as we say, not by reason' (Lawrence 1980: 91).

In this paper I would like to consider what might be revealed by a reading of Lawrence's earliest, more naturalistic stories, from the perspective of the Anthropocene. In doing so, the article seeks to answer questions like: What signs might there be in these early texts of Lawrence's later expression of his anxieties about human relationship with the cosmos? Is his later articulation of the tensions that are the source of those anxieties to be found in his earliest short fiction? How successful is his earliest mode of the short story in raising questions that might trouble his readers today? Do stories written by Lawrence around the First World War offer any clues to the causes of our present environmental crisis? How does the relationship between nature and gender that would guide an ecofeminist reading contribute to and problematize all these foregoing questions? Framed in this way, such issues might require two areas of theoretical clarification. First, what are the assumptions of a

retrospective Anthropocene reading strategy? Second, what is the rationale for an ecofeminist focus on these stories?

Firstly, The notion of a 'reading strategy' as an approach to the reception of historical works by present-day readers can be clarified by recent developments in the field of Classical Studies and in particular Juan Christian Pellicer's recent book *Preposterous Virgil: Reading Through Stoppard, Auden, Wordsworth, Heaney* (2022) on the reception of Virgil's work. Writing of reception studies approaches to reading Virgil, Pellicer notes 'the capacity of his work to absorb later creative responses that Virgil himself could not have anticipated' (Pellicer 2022: 10). By considering as legitimate 'later creative responses', from the reader's situated concerns and interests, meanings can be discovered that are beyond the author's intentionality. Pellicer is himself following the approach to reception studies developed by the Classics scholar Charles Martindale's influential book *Redeeming the Text* (1993) in which he argued that considering an ancient text's meaning for a later reader 'opens up fresh hermeneutical possibilities' (Martindale 1993: 54). Where Wolfgang Iser's original reception theory emphasised a plurality of individual meanings in a text (1978), Pellicer and Martindale's approach considers the cultural context of the reader's making new meanings, as in Martindale's pioneering essay 'Green Politics: the *Eclogues*' (1997).

Assuming this approach to reading D. H. Lawrence in the Anthropocene breaks new ground in Lawrence studies which have tended to be biographically based and to have been reading, from a historical context, the author's intentionality. Of course, over the last hundred years Lawrence has always been read unavoidably 'at the point of reception', often unconsciously. Pellicer's approach to reading Virgil is explicit about 'an acceptance of reading anachronistically' (Pellicer 2022: 10, 48) as will the contemporary reader with an awareness of the urgent need to engage with the Anthropocene. But there are dangers in this approach. Fiona Becket's pioneering ecocritical discussions of Lawrence (Becket 2009, 2019) have been careful to avoid 'attempting to claim Lawrence for deep ecology' (Becket 2009: 157) as the Lawrence scholar Keith Sagar did in his later criticism (Sagar 2005: 311). Becket points out that 'Lawrence's vision is human-centred' because humans are the problem (Becket 2009: 157). Meanwhile Modernist scholars such as Jeffrey Mathes McCarthy (2015), Michael Rubenstein and Justine Neuman (2020), Andrew Kalaidjian (2020) and Joseph Anderton (2021) have recently been explicit in reading Lawrence from an Anthropocene perspective because, as Peter Adkins says, 'the history of the Anthropocene is also the history of modernity' (Adkins 2022: 3). These scholars have argued that, beyond Lawrence's explicit critiques of industrial capitalism, materialism and the despoliation of the countryside, the present-day reader can be led to discern the deeper causes of an Anthropocene psychology and unease within a dysfunctional human culture's relation with the cosmos. Over his whole oeuvre one can see that alternative basic values, attitudes, notions of wealth and (rarely) alternative social forms, are explored and critiqued by Lawrence with direct implications for potential recovery from the Anthropocene. Can reading Lawrence's earliest stories in this way produce what Pellicer calls 'new ways for [works] to mean again, in readings that will depart and differ from the previous ones' (Pellicer 2022: 17)? Nature in Lawrence's works has been previously seen as context, albeit often a symbolic one, for the human dramas.

Ecocriticism foregrounds the environment in stories as a key to understanding crucial aspects of those dramas. The ecocritic in the Anthropocene deploys a reading strategy that looks more broadly at clues for causes and antidotes for our present predicament, offering perhaps, 'later creative responses that [Lawrence] himself could not have anticipated' (Pellicer 2022: 10).

Secondly, if ecofeminism grew from a fundamental critique of the masculinist domination of both nature and of women in a patriarchal society (Gates 1998), it is surprising that Lawrence's work has not attracted more ecofeminist attention. Early feminist critiques of Lawrence tended to focus on the author rather than close readings of the complex and contradictory texts. But second wave feminist attacks in the 1970s, such as Kate Millett's, have been succeeded by more nuanced gender studies. Accusations of essentialism might still be levelled at some of Lawrence's strongest women characters such as the two women in the story 'The Fox' or Lou's identification with the horse in *St Mawr*. However, the essentialism characterised by Sherry Ortner's famous question in her essay title, 'Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?' (Ortner 1974), was the very myth that the French writer who coined the term 'ecoféminisme', Françoise d'Eaubonne, sought to avoid in bringing together feminism and ecology in her book *Ecologie Féminisme* (1978): 'I am […] far from putting together, in an uncertain way, two myths – that of the eternal woman and of the inexhaustible Earth' (trans. Gates 1998: 18). Thus the concept of female essentialism was rejected at the very moment of the inception of ecofeminist theory in France. As has been suggested, Lawrence can be accused of essentialising both women and nature at times. More recently, however, ecofeminism has paid attention to the implications for women of Lawrence's critiques (Rebekah Taylor-Wiseman 2023: 253) and alternative notions of masculinity in his novels (Gifford 2023). However, the latter book, as has been admitted, discussed only late short fiction. It is surely time to turn to a consideration of the earliest stories from the perspective of ecofeminism in the Anthropocene. Such an approach to Lawrence's first collection of stories can be explored through three broad themes: patriarchal power, nature's affect, and alternative values. Whether intended or not, these themes are sequential through the collection, moving, it will be argued, from critique to regeneration.

Patriarchal Power

Lawrence's first collection of short stories, *The Prussian Officer and Other Stories* (1914) was not intended to be thought of as a collection of war stories. Almost all of them were initially written before the First World War and the book included his very earliest stories. The title of the book, derived from its opening story, was not Lawrence's choice, just as this story was not his choice for the first place in the collection. These decisions were made by Edward Garnett, an early mentor and literary advisor to the publisher Duckworth. But the largely critical war-time reviews of a *Prussian* titled book did, in fact, identify the collection's central theme, although they complained of it in terms of typically Edwardian literary expectations: 'Mr Lawrence is too much concerned with the queer dark corners' (*New Statesman*), or 'the cruder and more instinctive side of humanity' (*Athenaeum*) (Lawrence 1983: xxxiv). These reviewers were disturbed by the author's explorations of the tensions between what he was later to characterise, in *Apocalypse II*, as 'Mind' and being bodily 'in

touch' – 'the queer dark corners' where 'the instinctive side of humanity' battled with the expectations and power of 'Mind'.

The first two stories are not actually about war and not really about the army, but about male-on-male, master and servant bullying in order for Lawrence to explore alternative modes of masculinity. An Anthropocene ecofeminist eye will notice that both nature and women contribute to Lawrence's exploration of masculinities in his storytelling. The title character in 'The Prussian Officer' is, indeed, Prussian, but more significantly he is 'a Prussian aristocrat, haughty and overbearing' (Lawrence 1983: 2). The officer is contrasted with his young orderly, who 'copied out a verse for his sweetheart's birthday card' (Lawrence 1983: 7), by his treatment of women: 'Now and then [the officer] took himself a mistress. But after such an event, he returned to duty with his brow still more tense, his eyes still more hostile and irritable' (Lawrence 1983: 2). After a year of being bullied by his master the orderly felt 'like a wild thing caught, he felt he must get away' (Lawrence 1983: 4). This, in turn, was sensed by the officer; it had 'penetrated through the officer's stiffened discipline, and perturbed the man in him' (Lawrence 1983: 4). The 'man in him' is clearly jealous of the orderly's sensitivity towards his sweetheart which Lawrence characterises as being concerned with touch: 'He went with her not to talk, but to have his arm round her, and for physical contact. This eased him, made it easier to ignore the captain' (Lawrence 1983: 5). Emphasising the contrast rather too obviously, Lawrence has the captain go away for some unsatisfactory days with a woman: 'It was a mockery of pleasure. He simply did not want the woman' (Lawrence 1983: 6). The crisis in the men's relationship comes when the orderly is forced to admit, after some prevarication, that he was writing verses for his girl and the officer kicks him in viscous anger. The orderly is not conforming to the captain's notion of masculinity and Lawrence is clear that male domination also implies the devaluing of males who do not conform to the standards of masculinity that guide patriarchy. This attack precipitates the orderly's killing of the officer, his escape into the woods and his death from a combination of exhaustion and heatstroke. Again, rather explicitly, Lawrence concludes the story with the image of the bodies of the two men side by side in the mortuary, one 'laid rigidly at rest' and 'the other looking as if every moment it must rouse into life again' (Lawrence 1983: 21). Between rigidity and rousing to life, it is clear where the writer's sympathies lie.

The significant role of nature for the orderly in this story will be discussed in the next section, but for the moment it is clear that Lawrence's interest in this story is his personal satisfaction in exposing the dangerous crassness of patriarchal power in a hierarchical society where authority is invested in a certain kind of masculinity. In *Ecological Masculinities* Martin Hultman and Paul M. Pulé preferred to refer to patriarchy as 'male domination' in order to 'expose the systematic devaluing of all non-males and non-humans by a male dominated world' (Hultman and Pulé 2018: 3). They have responded to the ecofeminist Greta Gaard pointing out that both ecofeminism and ecocriticism more widely have had 'significant silences' on the potential for a notion of ecomasculinity (Gaard 2017: 166). Hultman and Pulé therefore sought to 'provide a framework for the ways men, masculinities and Earth are examined' (Hultman and Pulé 2018: 53). This is precisely what Lawrence is exploring in the

first story in his first collection of short fiction. The captain's attitude to the 'other' – towards women and towards an alternative masculinity - in this story, clearly representing 'male domination', thus has wider implications for readers in the Anthropocene as Lawrence's original title for this story indicates.

This story was written in June 1913 as 'Honour and Arms', a title which comes from an aria from Handel's *Samson* taunting the power of Samson: 'Honour and arms scorn such a Foe, / 'Tho I cou'd end thee at a Blow' (Lawrence 1983: 249). This title evokes the alternative power that is withheld by deference; it is where the true honour lies, the honour that comes from forbearance. The implication is that strength is *given* to Samson only by an alternative conception of 'honour and arms', an alternative conception of masculinity. Such a subtle and negotiated dynamic is played out in the dramas of Lawrence's major novels. He had considered the title 'Tenderness' for his final novel, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Here, in the first story of his first collection of short stories, is an evocation of an alternative masculinity to that patriarchal power which was responsible over centuries of human hubris for what we now recognise as the Anthropocene. Following Hultman and Pulé, the ecofeminist Lydia Rose refers to this patriarchal power as the 'hegemonic masculinity' of a 'dominant hierarchy' of alpha males who have historically controlled both women and nature (Rose 2023: 321). Rose links this directly to the Anthropocene that has resulted from 'manipulations of the environment situated as male-dominated activities and careers' (Rose 2023: 324-5). Male domination of otherness, from a position of hierarchical power in 'The Prussian Officer', has implications for the otherness of nature, readers in the Anthropocene will note. Such a conclusion is what might have been expected from Pellicer's notion of 'the capacity of [the] work to absorb later creative responses that [the earlier writer] himself could not have anticipated' (Pellicer 2022: 10).

Women play a greater role in the second story, 'The Thorn in the Flesh', in defining and defending the character of the young soldier, Bachmann, who pushes his 'brutal, barking' sergeant backwards over a river cliff (Lawrence 1983: 23). Marina Ragachewskaya points to the role of nature in defining the character of the central figure in that the story is 'based on the textual contrast between the vital forces of nature and the restriction and closure of the military consciousness' (Ragachewskaya 2015: 18). Bachmann is a soldier who notices, whilst he is marching with his troop, 'the small vines dusty by the road-side, the poppies among the tares fluttering and blown to pieces, the distant spaces of sky and fields all free with air and sunshine. But he was bound in a very dark enclosure of anxiety inside himself' (Lawrence 1983: 23). That anxiety bursts into action when his sergeant's face is screaming into his own and he raises his arm in self-defence, knocking the sergeant backwards. He runs and finds himself walking down a field path where hay is being gathered and loaded onto a cart. From his inner darkness of spirit, 'detached and impersonal' (Lawrence 1983: 26), he sees a world of which he is not a part: 'he felt himself looking out of darkness on to the glamorous, brilliant beauty of the world around him, outside him' (Lawrence 1983: 26). Here is the almost paradisal world that is outside the brutal, humiliating male world of the army. Bachmann is drawn towards the Baron's grand house where his sweetheart Emilie is the maidservant. The focus of the story now turns upon Emilie's virgin anxiety towards the male

body and Bachmann's sensitivity to it, easing it away as one 'in touch', as Lawrence would later put it. Again, the rejection of patriarchal power is followed, in this story, by a much more nuanced mode of alternative masculinity that is revealed in a relationship of tenderness.

It is clear that Bachmann's mode of masculinity is represented by a sensitivity to both nature and the woman – what Hultman and Pulé might identify as an ecomasculinity. But Lawrence's language of 'subjection' is problematic in his attempt to express Emilie's sexual inexperience: 'But she was virgin and shy, and needed to be in subjection, because she was primitive and had no grasp on civilized forms of living, nor on civilized purposes' (Lawrence 1983: 32). At times Lawrence does not escape the patriarchal language of his culture, nor his privileged class position in the language of condescension in 'primitive'. It seems that Lawrence is suggesting that Emilie needs to be guided by a man because she lacks sexual sophistication. Bachman, on the other hand, 'was a gentleman in sensibility, although his intellect was not developed' (Lawrence 1983: 32). But what they achieve on their second night together, also seems 'a victory' on her part as much as his: 'While the moisture of torment and modesty was still in her eyes, she clasped him closer, and closer, to the victory and the deep satisfaction of both of them' (Lawrence 1983: 36). However, this cannot last; patriarchal authority cannot be outflanked in this society. The Baron gives Bachmann away and the story concludes with Emilie being admonished as a fool for not dismissing Bachmann earlier. In the Baron's words, '"He's done for now"' (Lawrence 1983: 39). As the male world of the establishment closes ranks, the reader has been left with a memory of an alternative world, co-existing with that of the army, of paradisal beauty, the possibility of 'deep satisfaction', of sensitive masculinity and of instinctive rebellion against patriarchal power.

Nature's Affect

It is impossible to discuss notions of sensitive masculinity in these two stories without reference to the crucial role of nature in the narrative's tensions. 'The Prussian Officer' opens with the soldiers marching towards the end of a hot day embedded in the landscape by which they mark their progress: 'the mountains drew gradually nearer and more distinct' (Lawrence 1983: 1). The orderly stares at the mountains 'that rose sheer out of the land, and stood fold behind fold, half earth, half heaven, the heaven the barrier with slits of soft snow in the pale, bluish peaks' (Ibid). Tired and in pain as he is, nevertheless this description represents his perception of his environment. It is attentive to physical details of colour, but also carries a certain feeling in that 'half earth, half heaven'. This is no ordinary plodding young soldier. At the end of the story, on the run, he sees the mountains again, 'So still, gleaming in the sky, fashioned pure out of the ore of the sky, they shone in their silence. He stood and looked at them, his face illuminated' (Lawrence 1983: 19). But thirst and delirium eclipse this illumination and he falls asleep. Before he is found, unconscious and about to die, he has a last sight of the mountains: 'He stared till his eyes went black, and the mountains as they stood in their beauty, so clean and cool, seemed to have it, that which was lost in him' (Lawrence 1983: 20). The reader is invited to consider what, precisely, has been lost in him – his own inner beauty? His capacity for empathetic connection with nature? Vivid life itself? Something in natural beauty that was essential to his being and sustained him?

Shirley Bricout has characterised as ‘innovative dynamic forms’ Lawrence’s evocation of the affect of landscape in ‘The Prussian Officer’ (Bricout 2023: 140). I use the term ‘affect’ here in the sense defined by Alexa Weil von Mossner in *Affective Ecologies* as ‘understanding the mind as both *embodied* (in a physical body) and *embedded* (in a physical environment)’ (Mossner 1017: 4). Of course, as Mossner goes on to point out in her book, bodily perception cannot be separated from a deeply emotional response, just as an embedded mind demands some degree of empathetic interest in the environment. In this story, Bricout points out, the orderly’s sensitive awareness of landscape is established by the affect of a broad panorama, whereas in the second story a similar awareness is established by fleeting glimpses by the roadside. What Bricout refers to as ‘two aesthetic modes of vision’ (Bricout 2023: 140) are actually two modes of affect by which Lawrence suggests alternative modes of masculinity to the macho soldierly stereotype.

What the reader is given here is a sense of nature’s affect upon Lawrence’s characters. A combination of close attention, linguistic celebration and human empathy are the fundamental prerequisites for caring for the cosmos. Such values - what Lawrence latterly called ‘connection’ - are the basis for nature conservation in readers and a caring response today to the Sixth Extinction and the Anthropocene. As Lawrence concluded in *Apocalypse*, ‘We are unnaturally resisting our connection with the cosmos, with the world’ (Lawrence 1980: 148). What was explicit in his last work is already present in his first collection of stories. In the stories in this volume the values implicitly conveyed in the affect of nature upon Lawrence’s characters are sensed by the reader at an almost subliminal level. In her book *Radical Animism: Reading for the End of the World* (2021), Jemma Deer proposes a notion of the ‘animism of literature’ (Deer 2021: 40), arguing that reading is a creative engagement with the agency of the text that is a two-way process of the ‘textual unconscious’ (Deer 2021:149). Her etymological interpretation of ‘world’ is from *wær-æld*, the age of man. In *Reading for the End of the World* Deer recognises that human survival depends upon ‘the end of a world in which human beings narcissistically act as if they are separable from or independent of other living things’ (Deer 2021: 2). The textual unconscious of the stories in Lawrence’s first collection works in precisely this way through the affect of the living world that his characters inhabit, whether represented by weather, animals, flowers, brown turf or dazzling willows.

In the story ‘Shades of Spring’ Lawrence makes a more extended evocation of several dimensions of connectedness. It begins with Syson returning to the landscape of his past and making nostalgic reconnection with ‘the eternal […] waiting for him, unaltered’ (Lawrence 1983: 98). The affect of the path through the woods is explicit: ‘He was curiously elated, feeling himself back in an enduring vision’ (Lawrence 1983: 98). But the word ‘vision’ hints at the self-delusion of the ‘enduring’. What has changed, he quickly finds, is that the keeper he meets, Arthur Pilbeam, is now courting the girl, Hilda, whom Syson had left behind. Social change is as ongoing as the change in nature that Syson’s ‘vision’ here prevents him from noticing. One might be tempted to call this a pastoral vision, but for Lawrence’s including Syson’s view ‘through a great window in the wood’ of the pit and its village which ‘strewed the bare upland as if it had tumbled off the passing waggons of industry, and been

forsaken' (Lawrence 1983: 98). Lawrence's passing critique of industrial despoliation is unwaveringly consistent in his fiction. When he comes to the farm where Hilda and her family live Syson does notice, 'with tangled emotions', change in the increase of the primroses 'which he himself had brought here and set' (Lawrence 1983: 101). But Lawrence is concerned to suggest that Syson's 'tangled emotions' are not just about meeting Hilda again. They result, in part, from his idealisation of nature which also expresses, at the same time, a genuine response to the affect of elements like 'the sound of myriad-threaded bird-singing, which went mostly unheard' (Lawrence 1983: 102). The point is that Hilda feels patronised by the idealisation of what, for her, is an everyday living environment: '"It is awfully nice," he said, "You keep a real idyllic atmosphere – your belt of straw and ivy buds." Still they hurt each other' (Lawrence 1983: 103).

The achievement of Lawrence's writing in this story is his complete integration of nature and the human – what cultural critics, Donna Haraway and Bruno Latour, called 'nature-culture' (1991) and 'natureculture' (2004) respectively, in an awkward attempt to dissolve boundaries. Beyond the construction of contrasts in 'The Daughters of the Vicar' in *The Prussian Officer*, or the way in 'The Shadow in the Rose Garden' responses to two gardens distinguish two characters, or the symbolisation of the darkness of the night at the end of 'The Daughters of the Vicar', in 'Shades of Spring' the emotional dynamics are not expressed through the references to the affect of nature; inner and outer nature are porous in the very texture of the writing. Even as Syson is evoking 'Arcady' in his casual, surface conversation, he is gradually realising that Hilda is 'not what he had known her to be […] she was something quite other, and always had been' (Lawrence 1983: 104). She sees this in his face: 'the thing she had most dreaded in the past, and most needed, for her soul's sake' (Lawrence 1983: 104). Thus she comes into a power of her own, showing him her bird's nests and using dialect names for the birds. 'She was using a language they had both of them invented. Now it was all her own. He had done with it. She did not mind his silence, but was always dominant, letting him see her wood' (Lawrence 1983: 105).

This female empowerment derives from the quality of Hilda's connectedness to her environment, a quality that is in her very language. 'He had done with it' because he had not only moved away from direct contact with this place, with this nature, but because, she tells him, his connectedness had always been through 'Mind', through knowledge, through the abstract represented by his word 'Arcady'. When Hilda tells him that, '"I am like a plant, I can only grow in my own soil"' (Lawrence 1983: 106), she is asserting a different kind of knowledge from that in the books Syson still sends her; it is the knowledge ecocritics call 'natureculture' (Latour 2004). The final image of Hilda in the keeper's hut to which she has taken Syson is of her putting on a cloak of furs and speaking of her lover as a wild animal who is also 'thoughtful – but not beyond a certain point' (Lawrence 1983: 107). It is not clear whether this final additional phrase is Hilda making a point to Syson or Lawrence making a rather heavy-handed point to the reader. Since she has complained about having been bullied into intellectual life by the aesthete Syson in the past, the phrase marks her maturity of judgement about her balance of values.

We see this enacted in a curious final scene in which Syson, having left, walks beside a brook where he sees a kingfisher and is ‘extraordinarily moved’ (Lawrence 1983: 110). But he is not, at this point, as Keith Cushman claims, ‘unknowingly making his first progress toward Hilda’s new insight’ (Cushman 1978: 147). This ‘wonderful world’ of nature, ‘-marvellous, for ever new’ (Lawrence 1983: 110) - is not accessible to him because he is ‘wounded’ by his realisation that the world he had thought he had lived in with Hilda was a false one. Just as he had idealised nature, he had not truly known her. When he overhears voices, it is Hilda reassuring Arthur that Syson has now gone out of her life. In an instinctive act, she sucks a bee’s poison from a sting on Arthur’s arm. Her caring for him is endorsed by her telling him to go home to get some sleep with the words, ‘“You know I love you”’ (Lawrence 1983: 111). But her empowerment extends to her resisting his desire for an immediate marriage: ‘“What more would you have by being married? It is most beautiful as it is”’ (Lawrence 1983: 112). There is a subtle suggestion, as Arthur leaves, of her self-confidence in her love and its rootedness in her connection with her environment as Lawrence writes: ‘She stood at the gate, not watching him, but looking over the sunny country’ (Lawrence 1983: 112). Having absorbed all this, Syson departs for the town where his future obviously lies, as Hilda’s does not.

Alternative Values

Hilda’s characterisation to Syson of what she values in Arthur is an alternative to her recollection of being mentally bullied by Syson: ‘He is very curious – he has some of a wild animal’s cunning – in a nice sense – and he is inventive, and thoughtful – but not beyond a certain point’ (Lawrence 1983: 107). Readers of Lawrence in the Anthropocene will be considering what values are needed now, not only to counter its consequences, but to live beyond them, should such counter actions be effective. Essential to such considerations will be seeking values that not only subvert patriarchy, but that offer ways of living beyond it. The final four stories in *The Prussian Officer* focus particularly on alternative values in human relationships, most significantly in ‘Odour of Chrysanthemums’.

The famously crafted opening paragraph of ‘Odour of Chrysanthemums’ is about a steam engine. But the second paragraph is about the garden above which it will stop. The juxtaposition of industry and nature is both precisely that of the coal mine and the fields that surround it, and that of the human cost of the ‘age of coal’ and human resilience that connects with ‘the vital energies of the cosmos’, as Cushman said of this story before the Anthropocene was named (Cushman 1978: 76). The juxtaposition is casually made as Mrs Bates takes a stem of chrysanthemums from the garden and smells the flower before tucking it into her apron waistband as she goes to speak to the driver of the engine, who is her father. When her husband is brought home dead from a pit accident Elizabeth Bates has the body placed in the parlour where she had previously placed two vases of chrysanthemums: ‘There was a cold, deathly smell of chrysanthemums in the room’ (Lawrence 1983: 193-4). With her husband’s mother she washes the body of her dead husband and contemplates her relationship with him - the degree to which they had been ‘in touch’ with each other.

The sensitivity to touch in the process of laying out the body of a son and a husband is given emotional prominence by the writer. The wife shares a maternal instinct with her mother-in-law as she washes the body and the mother wipes it dry. The wife had been growing angry as she had expected her husband's lateness to be caused by his self-destructive tendency towards drunkenness. Underlying that anger is not only her concern for him, but a maternal instinct for the protection of her children and their family. It is the wife and mother who takes charge when the body is brought home, telling the weeping mother-in-law, '"You must help me now"' (Lawrence 1983: 196). So, in uneasy female solidarity they care for the dead man, the victim of the mining industry. It is in touching the body that Elizabeth Bates reflects upon the lack of intimacy in her marriage, their separateness even as they were 'exchanging their nakedness repeatedly' (Lawrence 1983: 198). She accepts responsibility for having 'refused him as himself' and 'She was grateful to death, which had restored the truth. And she knew she was not dead' (Lawrence 1983: 198). This positive outcome is expressed as both a motherly resilience of getting on with life and a wider sense of vulnerability in the final lines of the story: 'She knew she submitted to life, which was her immediate master. But from death, her ultimate master, she winced with fear and shame' (Lawrence 1983: 199).

The story's title resonates with the natural source of Elizabeth Bates' choice of life in the face of death. It is an understated achievement of Lawrence's art that represents a synthesis of his themes in *The Prussian Officer*. Mrs Bates has an affinity with nature, as the title of the story emphasises. But in choosing the values of life she has to confront the death process of the male-dominated industrial culture in which she lives. The association of chrysanthemums with death (Sagar 1966: 15) is a human construct, a cultural choice that can be resisted. She first smelled the chrysanthemums for themselves and she did not place them in the parlour for their 'cold, deathly smell' (Lawrence 1983: 193). Lawrence cut 'pink' and 'pale' from his first description of them in an earlier draft so that they remained unglamourised 'ragged wisps' (Lawrence 1983: 272). So their odour is established as both a subtle force of natural life and an association with the death process of the industrial culture that constructs that odour as 'cold, deathly'. Elizabeth Bates must negotiate both whilst choosing life.

Lawrence's representations in his work of the struggle to choose life in this way was, for previous generations of Lawrence scholars, a moral triumph. When F. R. Leavis wrote in the 1950s that Lawrence 'has an unfailingly sure sense of the difference between that which makes for life and that which makes against it' (Leavis 1955: 325) he was writing in metaphysical terms, in this case against the criticisms of Lawrence by T. S. Eliot. But on the day that I write this, the secretary general of the United Nations urges the world to take a last opportunity to choose life in the face of the death process brought on by climate change caused, in large part, by the 'age of coal'. The final synthesis report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) indicates, says its chair, Hoesung Lee, that 'if we act now, we can still secure a liveable sustainable future for all' (*The Guardian* 21 March 2023). Reading the final story of *The Prussian Officer*, 'Odour of Chrysanthemums', in the Anthropocene gives a new and urgent meaning to Lawrence's first collection of short stories - his critique of patriarchal industrial power, his advocacy for what now might be recognised as

an ecomasculinity, his insistence on nature's affect and the alternative values he offers society. It has been the claim of this paper that the signs of these crucial aspects of Lawrence's work are at work in different and significant ways throughout his first collection of short fiction. Previous critics have touched upon some of these aspects of *The Prussian Officer* in the past as separate features of the stories. But from an Anthropocene ecofeminist perspective it is their integrated force that gives new meaning to the volume as a whole. What was regenerative for readers in 1914 facing the apocalypse of an industrialised world war might offer readers in 2024 facing the apocalypse of the Anthropocene rather different, but equally significant, meanings of critique and regeneration.

References

Adkins, Peter (2022), *The Modernist Anthropocene: Nonhuman Life and Planetary Change in James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Djuna Barnes*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Anderton, Joseph (2021), 'Revolt against the Anthropos: The Human-Environment Conflicts in D. H. Lawrence', in Jon Hegglund and John McIntyre (eds), *Modernism and the Anthropocene: Material Ecologies of Twentieth-Century Literature*, London: Lexington Books.

Becket, Fiona (2009), 'D. H. Lawrence, language and green cultural critique', in Howard J. Booth (ed.), *New D. H. Lawrence*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

------ (2019), 'Green Lawrence: Consciousness, Ecology, and Poetry', in Indrek Männiste (ed.), *D. H. Lawrence, Technology, and Modernity*, London: Bloomsbury.

Bell, Michael (1991), *D. H. Lawrence: language and being*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Black, Michael (1992), 'A Kind of Bristling in the Darkness: Memory and Metaphor in Lawrence', *The Critical Review* 32, pp. 29-44.

Bricout, Shirley (2023) 'The Panorama and the Kaleidoscope: Landscapes in "The Prussian Officer"', *Journal of D. H. Lawrence Studies*, 6.3: 139-142.

Contreras, Sheila (1993/4), '"These Were Just Natives to Her": Chilchui Indians and "The Woman Who Rode Away"', *D. H. Lawrence Review 25*, 1-3: 91-103.

Crutzen, Paul and Eugene F. Stoermer (2000), 'The Anthropocene', *IGBP Newsletter* 41, pp. 17-18.

Cushman, Keith (1978), *D. H. Lawrence at Work: The Emergence of the Prussian Officer Stories*, Brighton: Harvester.

d'Eaubonne, Françoise (1978), *Ecologie Féminisme: Révolution ou Mutation?*, Paris: Les Editions A. T. P.

Deer, Jemma (2021), *Radical Animism: Reading for the End of the World* (2021), London: Bloomsbury.

el-Samad, Soha (2021), 'Lawrence's "ecojouissance": A Responsible Liaison with the Ethical', *Études Lawrenciennes 53: D. H. Lawrence and the Anticipation of the Ecocritical Turn*, https://journals.openedition.org/lawrence/2720.

Finney, Brian (1982), 'Introduction', *Selected Short Stories: D. H. Lawrence*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Gaard, Greta (2017), *Critical Ecofeminism*, London: Lexington Books.

Gates, Barbara T. (1998), 'A Root of Ecofeminism: *Féminisme*', in Greta Gaard and Patrick D. Murphy (eds), *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy*, Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Gifford, Terry (1923), *D. H. Lawrence, Ecofeminism and Nature*, London: Routledge.

Harris, Janice (1984), *The Short Fiction of D. H. Lawrence*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Head, Dominic (2018), 'Short Stories', in Andrew Harrison (ed.) *D. H. Lawrence in Context*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Haraway, Donna (1991), *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, New York: Routledge.

Hultmann, Martin and Paul Mark Pulé (2018), *Ecological Masculinities: Theoretical Foundations and Practical Guidance*, London: Routledge.

Iser, Wolfgang (1978), *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, London: John Hopkins University Press.

Kalaidjian, Andrew (2020), *Exhausted Ecologies: Modernism and Environmental Recovery*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Latour, Bruno (2004), *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Lawrence, D. H. (1980), *Apocalypse and the Writings on Revelation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

------ (1988), *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine and Other Essays*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

------ (2013) *The Poems Volume 1*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

------ (1983), *The Prussian Officer and Other Stories*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

------ (1995), *The Woman Who Rode Away and Other Stories*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Leavis, F. R. (1955), *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist*, London: Chatto & Windus.

Martindale, Charles (1993), *Redeeming the Text: Latin Poetics and the Hermeneutics of Reception*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

------ (1997), 'Green Politics: The *Eclogues*', in Charles Martindale (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McCarthy, Jeffrey Mathes (2015*), Green Modernism: Nature and the English Novel, 1900 to 1930*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Millett, Kate (1970) *Sexual Politics*, London: Hart-Davis.

Mossner, Alexa Weik von (2017*), Affective Ecologies: Empathy, Emotion, and Environmental Narrative*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

Ortner, Sherry (1974), 'Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?', in Michell Z. Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (eds), *Woman, Nature, Society*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Pellicer, Juan Christian (2022) *Preposterous Virgil: Reading Through Stoppard, Auden, Wordsworth, Heaney*, London: Bloomsbury.

Ragachewskaya, Marina (2015), 'War Trauma and Madness in the Fiction of D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf', *Études Lawrenciennes 46: D. H. Lawrence, his Contemporaries and the First World War*, https://journals.openedition.org/lawrence/239.

Reid, Susan (2023), 'Short Readings of Selected Short Stories: Introduction', *Journal of D. H. Lawrence Studies*, 6.3: 131-2.

Rose, Lydia (2023), 'Hegemonic Masculinity and Ecofeminist Literature', in Douglas A. Vakoch (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Ecofeminism and Literature*, New York: Routledge.

Rubenstein, Michael and Justin Neuman (2020), *Modernism and Its Environments*, London: Bloomsbury.

Sagar, Keith (1966), *The Art of D. H. Lawrence*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

------ (2005), *Literature and the Crime Against Nature: From Homer to Hughes*, London: Chaucer Press.

Taylor-Wiseman, Rebekah (2023), 'English Literature and Feminism', in Douglas A. Vakoch (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Ecofeminism and Literature*, New York: Routledge.