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WE ARE OFF TO TAOS

IT IS LIKELY that Australia will have a strong presence at the forthcoming 15th International D.H. Lawrence Conference in Taos, New Mexico, in July.

The D.H. Lawrence Society of Australia, in conjunction with the D.H. Lawrence Society of North America, is co-sponsoring the Conference, along with several other international D.H. Lawrence organisations.

Although the Conference agenda has not yet been finalised, our DHL Society is sponsoring three speakers to present papers on aspects

of Lawrence's time in Australia in 1922, and the major novel he wrote there, *Kangaroo*.

Our Secretary, Sandra Darroch, is preparing a paper on the influence of Lawrence and *Kangaroo* on Australian Arts and Letters.

Our President, Robert Darroch, hopes to give a paper on Lawrence's "Dark Gods". DHLA member, Robert Whitelaw, proposes to elucidate some of the remaining unknowns about Lawrence's time in Sydney and Thirroul, and how Lawrence came to write *Kangaroo*.

Other Australian attendees could include Christopher Pollnitz, David Game and Barbara Kearns.

SITUATING ECOFEMINISM IN LAWRENCE'S STORIES

by

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THIS PAPER studies DH Lawrence's short stories written in the 1920s. The stories *The Border Line* (1924), *The Woman Who Rode Away* (1925) and *Sun* (1926) are considered from the ecocriticism perspective. The Environmental theme in these short stories is regarded in the context of ecofeminist aspect. By means of the concept 'natural environment' Lawrence tells about true values: harmony with oneself, congruous relationships and mutual understanding between man and woman. These values are based on dualism: masculine and feminine, mind and body, natural and human. The paper also studies the coalescence of female protagonist with natural environment in the short stories *The Border Line*, *The Woman Who Rode Away* and *Sun*. A change in woman's attitude to herself as well as to the society when uniting with natural environment in order to oppose dissonant man-woman relationships is evident in the writer's short stories. In this paper, I intend to show female transformation from the obedient woman to the self-confident, free and determined one, a woman-feminist, "the New Woman" (Wallace, 35). I also support the idea of

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Lawrentian female protagonists whose ecological awareness makes them progressive, uniting and liberated.

The late nineteenth-early twentieth century society was undergoing profound changes. Scientific progress, the industrial revolution, the springing up of new movements in the twentieth century: suffragists, feminism, ecofeminism and others replaced the traditional protagonist. The influence of the scientific revolution, personalized2tion and new technologies question the future of humanity.

French feminist Françoise d'Eaubonne, whose name is related to the emergence of the term 'ecofeminism', argued that the oppression, exploitation and colonization of the patriarchal society caused direct and irreversible damage to the environment. The emergency of ecofeminism or the ecological feminism movement united the aims of feminism and environmentalism. Ecofeminists presumed that the world could be brought back to its original equilibrium thanks to female intuition and gentle feelings, since for a long time the image of a woman was associated with nature, body and emotions. Ecofeminism followers also consider the crisis of the civilization and ecological disbalance because of industrial progress. They care for nature and the human world in the form of combating discrimination against women. A sufficiently large part of the ecofeminist movement seeks to recreate the mystical part, oriented to the ground of religions (paganism, witchcraft and magic).

Lawrence is also known to oppose mechanization and industrialization as they devalued and ruined the individual and environment. The literary imagery of Lawrentian woman goes through significant transformations from the early to the later short stories. In earlier short stories Lawrence predominately shows the household social and psychological reality of his time. It was not until the twentieth century that women were in the shadow of their husbands, they were true mothers, sisters, daughters, housewives, and respectable ladies. The woman's role was reduced to her general functions of housekeeping, childbirth and implementation of marital duties. In later stories (for instance, *The Border Line*, *The Woman Who Rode Away and Sun*) Lawrentian woman become initiative and capable of decisive actions. Hearth, home and children do not constitute a purpose in life for her, monotonous family life is not a sense of her life anymore. She escapes from her boring and routine life to unite with the natural environment in the search of love, contentment and happiness outside of her home.

Lawrence tried to find the balance in man-woman relationships proposing not to praise woman and humiliate man or vice versa. He suggested returning man's freedom and woman's independence – as it is necessary for the life of a healthy society, "to keep us organically vital, to save us from the mess of industrial chaos and industrial revolt" (*Boulton 106*).

At the same time, in the short stories *The Border Line*, *The Woman Who Rode Away and Sun* I trace ecofeminist ideas. These stories most brightly depict and reveal Lawrence's female protagonists' freedom in coalescence with the natural environment. The ecology of nature, spirit and flesh, and the achievement of their harmony give birth to a new woman. Juliet in *Sun*, the unnamed heroine 'She' in *The Woman Who Rode Away* and Katherine Farquhar in *The Border Line* go away, escaping from "mechanical relationship" with their husbands and abandoning everybody and everything – their children, husbands and homes – in search of happiness, satisfaction and freedom. Their everyday, monotonous lives were the burden for them (*Reid*).

Lawrence's short stories *Sun*, *The Border Line* and *The Woman Who Rode Away* reflect the inner condition of the protagonists in the reunion with the natural world. By means of the 'natural environment' concept, the writer identifies true values: harmony with oneself, harmonious relationships, and a mutual understanding. Nature is personalized through the forest as "a symbol of our deep, wild, subconscious as an integral part of the natural world, the deep psyche" (*Hurduz*); trees as they are "one of the most essential traditional symbols" (*Eisenbraun, 347*), flowers, birds and sun as it is "associated with the hero, as opposed to the father, who connotes the heavens" (*Eisenbraun, 317*). Trees in the forest help Lawrentian female protagonists perceive themselves and comprehend interpersonal relationships.

J. Wallace in his book *D. H. Lawrence, Science and Posthuman* offers Deleuze and Guatarri's concept of "rhizome" as a posthuman metaphor for tree (Wallace, 115). To Deleuze and Guatarri, Lawrence's work epitomizes the alternative to the conventional organicism, because the rhizome is characterized by "variation, symbiosis, offshoots, and contagion" (Wallace, 115). Thus, organicism, contagion and evolution bring forth the unity of woman with environment as its organic part. The ecology of nature, spirit and flesh, and the achievement of their harmony give birth to a free woman, a new woman, woman-feminist. Juliet in *Sun*, the unnamed heroine 'She' in *The Woman Who Rode Away* and Katherine in *The Border Line* go away, abandoning their old and habitual lifestyle, find freedom, joy of life and gladness in the union with the natural world. After consonance with the environment and in coalescence with trees and the sun, they become a new woman, with a different perception of life and the world as it is. Disharmony in the man-woman relationship is plain to see: Lawrence's protagonists may be interesting interlocutors to each other, but their bodies don't understand and don't perceive each other. The spiritual sphere and unexplainable, mysterious side of a human being's soul can be cognized by means of sensuality and corporality. The body is an instrument for perception of that very mysterious feeling which is not understood superficially. Sensuality and corporality help get to the deepest corners of a human's soul and psyche in general. Lawrentian female protagonists are happy when uniting with the primitive, with the environment and so-called natural mysticism. Importantly, Lawrentian female protagonists reject their unloved husbands (who love their wives) but give good reception and obedience to the tree and the sun, those "natural men" (ghost of Alan – *The Border Line* and He – *Sun*, Lawrence names the sun with the personal pronoun 'He') who cannot be with them in reality and cannot give them real love and relationships.

In these stories, one doesn't feel any borders between human (Juliet, Katherine and the unnamed heroine 'She' in *The Woman Who Rode Away*) and nature (the cypress tree, cactus, snake and sun). Speaking to her husband Maurice about her returning, Juliet feels "she can't go back into East Fifty-Seventh, she can't go back, she can't go back on this sun", she cannot leave 'Him' (Sun). (Lawrence, 994). She perceives the sun deeply as "in the majority of mythopoetic traditions the sun personifies the male principle which creates" (Hurduz). Juliet also "could feel the sun penetrating into her bones; nay, further, even into her emotions and thoughts" (Lawrence, 981). There are a lot of mentions of the word 'sun' in the story, a power which shines for everybody but embraces with its warmth – namely Juliet: "he could shine on a million people, and still be the radiant, splendid, unique sun, focused on her alone" (Lawrence, 983). Natural environment is an active and dynamic performer of the events and Lawrence unites natural phenomena with the action and the female protagonists' mood.

In the consonance with natural environment, Lawrence prophesies the birth of free, woman, new woman, emotionally renovated woman. This is a woman-feminist, who can choose, who presumes to be satisfied with a life in coalescence with the environment. Lawrence appeals to a reunion of human beings with natural environment. Lawrentian new woman, his free woman, his woman-ecofeminist (opposing old lifestyle and unloved husbands) is born – the new Juliet, new Katherine and new 'She'. They are decisive, determined and ready for courageous doings. Their ecological consciousness helps them be unrestricted, progressive and liberated.

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Rananim welcomes contributions of articles by D.H. Lawrence scholars from around the world. Please contact the Editor at sjd@cybersydney.com.au