

## SHORT READINGS OF SELECTED SHORT STORIES

CURATED BY SUSAN REID

### INTRODUCTION

This feature is a thought-adventure in what happens when ten critics respond to a call for short readings of short stories and the simple brief to explore a story *as* a short story. While Lawrence is recognised as “a major figure in the history of the twentieth-century short story”,<sup>1</sup> ranking alongside modernist innovators of the form such as Katherine Mansfield, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, his stories are more often mined for their biographical interest, or for what they say about the development of his long fiction, than they are studied as short stories. Book-length studies of the stories are few and far between,<sup>2</sup> and even articles are rare compared with the novels, including in this journal, so this feature serves as something of a corrective and a call for further contributions.

Critics were given a free choice of Lawrence’s stories and, happily, all three collections published in his lifetime are represented: three stories from *The Prussian Officer and Other Stories* (1914), two from *England, My England and Other Stories* (1922) and three from *The Woman Who Rode Away and Other Stories* (1928). Two critics drew on early or uncollected versions in the Cambridge Editions of *The Vicar’s Garden* and *Love Among the Haystacks*. The sample thus represents the span of Lawrence’s career in short fiction, and rather than privileging ideas of hierarchy or progression, it’s notable that the early and late stories are accorded more respect than critics tend to extend to the early and late novels. Each of the short studies that follows shines new light on a Lawrence story but what more can we learn by reading them together, as a constellation that reveals more about the scale and nature of Lawrence’s achievement in the form?

While it goes without saying that a Lawrence story turns on an intense moment of change, what is stark here is that often it's a moment of trauma and/or violence and/or mental disturbance: violent death (in three stories), an attempted suicide, an attempted assault, a mining accident, war-inflicted sight-loss, and a foreshadowing of war trauma; all with shades of psychological disturbances. In this context, 'Sun' (read by Ronald Granofsky) emerges as a rare example of a story that holds out hope of restoration, since, as Howard Booth observes of *The Prussian Officer* volume, Lawrence's stories often disturb because of their "depiction of mental distress and physical suffering without explanation or the prospect of alleviation".

Yet, alongside violence a prominent theme is 'Intimacy' – the title of an early story explored by Holly Laird (which prefigures the language of sacrifice in the later stories) – between people but also with animals, nature and the universe. But intimacy has its limits, as Terry Gifford concludes of Lawrence's failure to understand Native American consciousness in 'The Woman Who Rode Away', a problematic story to which Jim Phelps offers an imaginative response following this feature. But first, please enjoy these various invitations to plumb the psychological depths (A. D. King) or attend to what the surface of a story might yield (Laird and Bethan Jones), to consider its pedagogical form (Benjamin Hagen) or blurring of multiple borders (Irena Yamboliev) or conjunction of distance and proximity (Shirley Bricout and John Worthen). The results, to channel Worthen, are "miraculous".

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<sup>1</sup> Dominic Head, 'The Short Story', in *D. H. Lawrence in Context*, ed. Andrew Harrison (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2018), 101–10, 101.

<sup>2</sup> Notably Keith Cushman, *D. H. Lawrence at Work: The Emergence of the Prussian Officer Stories* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1978); Janice Harris, *The Short Fiction of D. H. Lawrence* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1984); and *Journal of the Short Story in English*, 'Special Issue: Transgressing Borders and Borderlines in the Short Stories of D. H. Lawrence', eds Shirley Bricout and Christine Zaratsian (Spring 2017).

## WHAT ABOUT 'INTIMACY'?

HOLLY A. LAIRD

When Lawrence first wrote the short story 'The Witch à la Mode' it was not gender-typing he aimed for but 'Intimacy' – as his first title indicates. Relationship, close relationship, relationship of a sexually charged kind drew him into this story, but the story's intimacies are not only sexual. Andrew Harrison thus writes about the story under this first title, taking 'Intimacy' as the section sub-title for his discussion of its autobiographical narrative.<sup>3</sup> John Worthen groups it with a series of titles smacking of something French and reads the tale as intimating Lawrence's own interest in breaking the nets of his English home to travel abroad, though I think a closer look suggests otherwise.<sup>4</sup> Worthen misses a rare beat when he also lists the story among those whose protagonist has no profession to speak of (Lawrence was a teacher at that time). This protagonist is in fact a businessman, attuned to issues of economy, efficiency and the wherewithal to provide for a family, which was expected of men at that time – hence indicating the motivation behind the first line of this story (in all versions): "When Bernard Coutts alighted at Croydon he knew he was tempting Providence" (*VicG* 125). His namesake, the Scottish Mr. Coutts, was renowned for the bank he joined in London in 1755, a bank still strong today. Lawrence's protagonist courts the improvident in a scenario that puts what counts as the protagonist's ultimate home in question.

'Intimacy' was not published in Lawrence's lifetime, though in 1911 he had intended to include it in a volume of short stories and returned in 1913 to revise it, following Edward Garnett's recommendations, re-titling it, first, 'The White Woman', then 'The Witch à la Mode'. Each new title distanced him further from the story's detailed "intimacies" and from its strong, independent woman protagonist. This story is not on the list of Lawrence's most canonical short stories, yet it has received attention from a range of

interested readers, and, as often in the history of Lawrence's reception, these interpreters disagree about practically everything in it. In the first comprehensive study of Lawrence's stories, Janice Harris examines its three versions (two holographs and a corrected typescript) and concludes that "Lawrence improved the style on each occasion, but kept the central intention and dynamic intact".<sup>5</sup> If Harris's next two sentences are meant to articulate that intention and dynamic – which she describes "In all versions", as Bernard Coutts "wandering without any clear direction. Having drifted into a relationship with a girl named Connie, Coutts enjoys idealizing her from a distance but 'vaguely he knew she would bore him'" – Harris's claim is not supported by the story's first version (which I prefer). Here, although Bernard seems at first (and describes himself as) adrift, he is a man increasingly driven by desire, and there is no sign whatsoever of any boredom. Harris argues further that this tale represents Lawrence's "intellectual young man as repressed, self-conscious, sexually ill at ease", but the other interpreters of this story reach other conclusions. The differences between their views – often emphatically delivered – could make for a fascinating study of Lawrence's reception, but I will abbreviate my remarks here to note merely that their approaches generally take psychological forms to reach antithetical diagnostic conclusions.

What happens if we focus on the first version of this story and read its "surface", in keeping with arguments propounded by Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus, to look closely at its literal meanings: thus foregrounding its writing of "intimacy" rather than what we suspect about its psychological depths?<sup>6</sup> As Bernard "alighted" at Croydon, he has travelled from Dieppe in coastal France to Ingleton in north Yorkshire, where his fiancée lives; he had planned to stop in London but has reserved a room in suburban Croydon, "where I feel at home" (*VicG* 125). He now deviates from plan to await a tram for Purley, thinking he might arrive in time for tea with friends, who do not expect him. "[F]agged to death" from this trip, he has feelings "of embarrassment, if not of

shame” at both choices, to stop neither at London nor Croydon, but keep on, and as he does, he makes his second avowal of intimacy, of love: “How well I know it—and love it”, he admitted. The car ran on familiarly. He listened for the swish, watched for the striking of the blue spark overhead, at the bracket. The sudden fervour of the spark splashed out of the apparently inanimate wire pleased him”.

With its “flutter[s]”, “leap[s]”, “glisten[ing]”, “colouring”, “dipping”, “exult[ing]” (and much more), this episode extends through the next five paragraphs, unfolding Bernard’s erotic relationship with his “familiar” surroundings. As if an extension of himself, the tramcar “ran on familiarly”, and he “listened” and “watched”, “pleased by” the “alight[ing]” arc lamps, the “colouring”, “dark night” and the evening star rising over the “glistening surf”: “How it dilates, the star, with recognition catching sight of me!” (*VicG* 125). There is conflict as well – violence inhabiting (as often in Lawrence’s writing) the crux of this relationship – as the “day battled with the night”, and “the blade of the new moon” elicits analogy with “those old priests [who] used a knife like that to strike the heart out of their victims, their sacrifices”. (Such figuration of sacrifice in Lawrence’s earliest writing anticipates the far more famous texts written in America, for example ‘The Woman Who Rode Away’).

The final paragraph devoted to this episode explodes with flowers – alyssum, hyacinths, daffodils and crocuses – and he is “no longer tired” (126). As I have recently noted in analysing the poem, ‘The Wild Common’, the writing of ‘Intimacy’ intensively evokes “the material” – anticipating posthumanist thought – in its live attention not only to the body, emotion and inner thinking of its protagonist, but to the protagonist’s interrelationship with his immediate environments, its sights, sounds, energies.<sup>7</sup> Lawrence’s prose re-embodies lived experience when one is immersed in the world and in relationships: not only to other people, but to the myriad objects of a dynamic ecology.

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<sup>3</sup> Andrew Harrison, *The Life of D. H. Lawrence* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 59–60.

<sup>4</sup> John Worthen, *D. H. Lawrence: The Early Years 1885–1912* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991), 62, 308, 148.

<sup>5</sup> Janice Harris, *The Short Fiction of D. H. Lawrence* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1984), 51.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus, ‘Surface Reading: An Introduction’, *Representations* 108.1 (2009), 9–10, 12.

<sup>7</sup> Holly A. Laird, ‘A material poetry’, in *The Bloomsbury Handbook to D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Annalise Grice (London: Bloomsbury, forthcoming 2024), 347–65.

### THE PEDAGOGICAL COHERENCE OF ‘THE FLY IN THE OINTMENT’

BENJAMIN D. HAGEN

When I first finished ‘The Fly in the Ointment’ (1913), I asked myself a few versions of the “question” that Lily Briscoe works out for herself in Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* (1927): “how ... connect this mass on the right hand with that on the left”?<sup>1</sup> How had D. H. Lawrence, I wondered, integrated the two sources of tension in the story – a gift of flowers; a home intruder – into a coherent whole? What did the “winter posy” (*LAH* 49) sent by Muriel before the sketch begins have to do with the young “slum-rat” (51) whom the narrator discovers that night in his landlady’s kitchen, the young man who threatens him, albeit unconvincingly, with a “poker” (50)? How think the concluding “rage” and “wretched” (53) loneliness that overtakes the narrator at the story’s end with and against the earlier, distracting pleasures of the “primroses” and “catkins” as well as the memories of Muriel and “the midlands” that they inspire (49)? What is consistent across the empty corridor of time, the “dim” “oblivious[ness] of everything” (50), the hazy blackout that connects the narrator’s late-night letter-

writing (responding to Muriel) with his somnambulant appearance at the stubborn kitchen door?

Though each of these questions could lead in a number of interpretive directions, it seems to me that Lawrence's lifelong preoccupation with teaching and learning – with pedagogy, in short – and the narrator's occupation *as a schoolteacher* weave together, however tenuously, the two parts of 'The Fly in the Ointment'. Indeed, the story is one of the finest examples of how Lawrence's decade-long teaching career could be said to prepare, inform and spill past the relatively few classroom scenes in his oeuvre, inflecting his portrayals of friendships and love-relations, the natural world, class anxieties and much more.

These inflections, however, are not just dramatic, thematic or biographical but formal in 'The Fly in the Ointment'. The narrator's career as a schoolteacher is not merely an ornamental detail drawn from the author's own life but, rather, *the* organising principle of the tale's point of view. It informs the setting as well as the daily life and occupational rhythm that Muriel's bouquet explicitly and implicitly interrupts, and it also pre-arranges how the narrator later responds in his letter to the gift-giver. Though the flowers distract him from "school and the sounds of the boys" (*LAH* 49) – "the boys must have thought me a vacant fool", he relates – a sense of pedagogy persists when the teacher sets aside his later marking ("miserable pieces of composition on 'Pancakes'" [50]) to write a response to Muriel. The flowers constitute, in this sense, a *counter* writing prompt that positions the absent Muriel as a pedagogue, displacing the narrator from his own position. She successfully interrupts his responsibilities and relations at school, putting him in the place of a student who feels compelled to give up his marking to draft a rich reflection of his own on the Midlands he misses. He records "a grass-hopper chirruping", "the carts on the street", the "old trees with gummy bark" that would leave "lips ... sticky" if "bit[ten] through" (50).

The tale's commencement *in medias res*, the narrator's rushed order to the landlady to put the winter bouquet in water, the blur of

the school day, the haze of the walk home, the daydream of being back in the Midlands, the failed effort to finish marking, the evening letter-writing and even the implicit love-connection between Muriel and the narrator – all of these details, which Lawrence packs into forty-four lines of the Cambridge text, have a logic and coherence when we see the background as fundamentally *pedagogical*. Pedagogy controls Lawrence’s narrative economy, his narrator’s point of view, as well as the way in which this narrator processes and responds to Muriel’s gift.

This pedagogical logic and coherence survive the narrator’s sleepwalk to the kitchen and also informs how he reacts to the “fellow” (LAH 51) – “a youth of nineteen or so” – whom he encounters there. Though strikingly different in tone from the story’s first page and a half, the conversation between these two men includes a surprising number of pedagogical and relational strategies that the teacher *and* intruder (hailed as if he were a student) both perform: for example, disciplinary and reactionary threats of violence and resistance, chastisement, interrogation, accusation, self-justification, patronisation, self-accounting, dismissal and self-reflection. If Muriel has interrupted the narrator’s teacher training – leaving him unable to instruct his boys or mark their papers – then the “miserable swine” (52) in the kitchen recalls the narrator not only to consciousness (after his sleepwalk) but to his disciplinary role as educator. Indeed, the narrator says as much: “he was writhing about in the space in which I had him trapped ... It was such a display as I had seen before, *in school*, and I felt again the old misery of helplessness and disgust” (50–1; emphasis added).

Remarking on an early draft of this story (initially titled ‘A Blot’), John Worthen notes, with surprise, the “extraordinarily unsympathetic” “tone” with which the narrator addresses the young man.<sup>2</sup> And yet, against the pedagogical background that sustains the story and coheres its parts together, the narrator’s hostility chimes with the more familiar atmosphere of *The Rainbow* (1915), in which Lawrence records with precision the slow development of Ursula Brangwen’s ugly pedagogical feelings, as well as the lesser

known ‘A Lesson on a Tortoise’ (1909), in which the narrator-teacher must also address a theft. If we keep in mind that Lawrence’s narrator in ‘The Fly’ is a teacher, those of us who are teachers might understand his reaction to the young man as a disconcertingly *relatable* reaction prepared by classroom experiences that exhaust teacherly attention and that regularly confront limited materials and resources (including positive and nurturing affects). Instead of being surprised by the narrator’s antipathy toward the young intruder, who admits he’d hoped to find “some boots”, we might take our cue from the pedagogical form of life that makes sense of the narrator’s divergent responses to Muriel’s gift and to the “brown eyes” of the thief, “in which low cunning floated like oil on top of much misery” (*LAH* 52). Far from inexplicable, Lawrence himself experienced firsthand how a career in teaching develops powers of sympathy and often prefigures violent instances of antipathy to (student) hardship.

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<sup>1</sup> Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, intro. Mark Hussey (New York: Harcourt, 2005), 56.

<sup>2</sup> John Worthen, *D. H. Lawrence: The Early Years: 1885–1912* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), 235.

**THE PANORAMA AND THE KALEIDOSCOPE:  
LANDSCAPES IN ‘THE PRUSSIAN OFFICER’**

SHIRLEY BRICOUT

Lawrence’s attentive management of landscape fashions a “verbal-visual style” that runs through the short story ‘The Prussian Officer’,<sup>1</sup> first published, in an abridged version, in *The English Review* as ‘Honour and Arms’ in August 1914. In both versions, Lawrence’s powerful descriptions of mountains and hills shift from

highly structured panoramic representations that immerse the viewers in the landscape to innovative dynamic forms that pay attention to fragmented details level with the observers. These shifts in perspective between distant and immediate locations resonate with two aesthetic modes of vision, the panorama and the kaleidoscope. Indeed, the panorama, which was revived in the late eighteenth century, consisted in an immersive experience of idealised landscapes painted on large canvasses fitted in a rotunda that positioned viewers in the centre of a world organised around them. The opening of 'The Prussian Officer' offers a similarly panoramic experience of the valleys and mountains, drawn from the Bavarian Loisach and Isar valleys, as the regiment marches in the countryside (*PO* 25). Just as a panorama controls the gaze, offering virtual reality while remaining above the peculiar and detail, the narrative perspective gives Lawrence's reader the illusion that the whole landscape can be contemplated at a glance. The marching regiment is the line of symmetry ("marched between") that organises the rural landscape into two panels ("On either hand") forming a 180°-degree view, whereas the mountains are positioned "in front" and draw "gradually nearer and more distinct" as the regiment marches "towards the mountains" (*PO* 1). Vanishing points and *trompe-l'oeil* pertaining to visual art, and to panorama in particular, are cleverly translated into words since the reader can picture the whole landscape.

Lawrence transmutes place into a similar painterly vision in the opening paragraphs of 'The Thorn in the Flesh', another short story devoted to the military, where the reader is provided with a sweeping view of the countryside around the garrison city of Metz, with its "patches of sunshine ... on the level fields, and shadows on the rye and the vineyards" (*PO* 22). The description borrows from another panoramic technique, called a prospect, which encompasses expanses of land, invariably dappled with sunlight. Unlike the narrative perspective in 'The Prussian Officer' which, like a *trompe-l'oeil*, leads the reader to believe that all the soldiers can also view the panorama despite occasional thickets of trees, bends

in the road and, above all, their position in the ranks, in its companion piece, 'The Thorn in the Flesh', the soldiers marching in the inner file are said to only catch glimpses of the surrounding landscape (23). Lawrence's management of landscape and space is therefore carefully fashioned from panoramic techniques to guide the reader's eye.

In 'The Prussian Officer', the immersive experience is further enhanced by the recurring references to the heat that ominously focus on bodily sensations and eventually on the enduring pain felt by one specific soldier, the orderly of the story. A retrospective account of his fraught relationship with his commanding officer interrupts the opening scene. When this account, which takes place indoors, comes to an end, the sweeping depiction of the landscape resumes (*PO* 12), but now subtle proto-cinematographic techniques steadily control the reader's perception of the scene. Indeed, as the regiment halts for a rest on a hill, the narrative voice repeats the opening description in reverse starting with the mountains and zooming in on the regiment resting, then on the distraught orderly. By contrast with the panorama, a more fragmented, kaleidoscopic view develops when the character engages with the landscape at a critical climax that includes his killing the commanding officer. The minute details that the orderly notices, such as the bog at his feet where "pale gold bubbles were burst, and a broken fragment hung in the air" (12), move the reader away from panoramic stasis to perpetual dynamic transformations that convey emotional confusion and trauma. Significantly, the semantic field of fragmentation hinges on detail ("Chips of wood littered the trampled floor, like splashed light") to assert the subjectivity of the orderly fighting "not to be plucked to pieces" (13). Thus, in this short story, the modernist formal engagement with fragmentation calls upon a kaleidoscopic technique that generates visual tropes to shift the narrative from whole to detail, ideal to individual, inclusion to alienation. Indeed, the orderly's "coloured mirage" (12) resonates with the shards of coloured glass that endlessly and randomly

combine in the play of mirrors and light inside the kaleidoscope, popularised in the nineteenth century.

Lawrence's verbal-visual style has evolved since *The Trespasser* (1912), where a straightforward comparison skilfully conjures the colourful ebullience of "scarlet soldiers, and ludicrous blue sailors, and all the brilliant women from church [who] shook like a kaleidoscope down the street" (*T* 55), so that in 'The Prussian Officer', the narrative capitalises on kaleidoscopic dynamics to dramatise the character's "allotropic states" (*2L* 183).<sup>2</sup> During his fatal delirium after the killing of his officer, the orderly's distorted vision combines colour and light ("thick, golden light behind golden-green glitterings, and tall, grey-purple shafts", *PO* 19), his hazy perception of his surroundings dissolving shapes and consistencies. He loses his spatial bearings although sounds and movements of squirrels and birds catch his attention unexpectedly like so many random happenings that sequence his spells of awareness of the woods. Moreover, the careful original layout of the panorama is shattered when the cold immutable mountains are seen from novel angles in the distance, the perspective also shifting from the geographic to the symbolic. Inevitably, the brevity and economy of the short story as genre intensify the dialectics between these two aesthetic experiences of vision, pitting the panoramic against the kaleidoscopic to depict the orderly's inescapable annihilation. Distance and proximity play, then, into the dynamics of this "compelling, almost expressionist, narrative",<sup>3</sup> that Lawrence regarded as "the best short story [he had] ever done" (*2L* 21).

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<sup>1</sup> Jack F. Stewart, 'Expressionism in "The Prussian Officer"', *D. H. Lawrence Review*, 18.2-3 (1985-86), 275-89, 284.

<sup>2</sup> See also *ibid.*, 283.

<sup>3</sup> Keith Cushman, *D. H. Lawrence at Work: The Emergence of the Prussian Officer Stories* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1978), 172.

**LAWRENCE'S CROOKED WOOD:  
'THE SHADOW IN THE ROSE GARDEN'**

ANDREW DAVID KING

Long before the tempo and temperature of D. H. Lawrence's 'The Shadow in the Rose Garden' rise, one of its characters – Frank, disaffected husband to the nameless wife whose encounter with a lost lover serves as the story's hinge – wanders into the garden of the seaside cottage where he and his wife are staying:

He contemplated the Tree of Heaven that flourished by the lawn, then sauntered on to the next plant. There was more promise in a crooked apple tree covered with brown-red fruit. Glancing round, he broke off an apple and, with his back to the house, took a clean, sharp bite. (*PO* 121)

Leave it to Lawrence to rewrite Genesis in three sentences. Frank turns from his temporary home and towards temptation; he does not, cannot, yet know what ruin, in the guise of an original sin's return, the coming day will bring. For now, the asymmetrical, the divergent, and the fallen attract him – so much so that he takes the apple and begins history again.

'The Shadow in the Rose Garden' is couched in the middle of Lawrence's first collection of short stories, *The Prussian Officer*, which appeared in 1914 in London (*PO* xiii). Previously accepted by Ezra Pound for publication in *The Smart Set* (1913) and later praised by T. S. Eliot in *After Strange Gods* (1934), the piece pulls a swarm of topics into its orbit – romance, dominance, history, repression, war, time – but its centre of gravity is trauma: the madness of war, and the madness war leaves behind, as one of its tragic sequelae.<sup>1</sup> The kernel of this madness, not prophetic insight but identity-effacing injury and illness, resides in the wife's old lover, the "lunatic" veteran and rector's son, Archie, who she encounters by chance in the rector's garden after years of thinking

him dead (*PO* 127). Or not quite by chance, as she has drawn her husband to the coast to revisit the scenes of her former courtship. The man she finds in that duplicate Eden – whose black eyes, “not a man’s eyes”, “stared without seeing” (126) – is the eponymous shadow from which the story draws its light.

The figure who, in a doubling of his own disability, renders her “mute and helpless” renders, too, the whole world “deranged” (*PO* 126). His fingers, she finds as she sits beside him, still tremble as they “had always inclined to”, surprising for “such a healthy man” (127). This trembling spreads to Frank’s fingers in the story’s final scene, where husband and wife are sundered not by the past but by the farce the past shows the present to be; in an earlier draft, the trembling infects the wife herself, as finding Archie again “made her tremble” (128).<sup>2</sup> Aghast – in the etymological sense of having encountered a ghost – at the fact of her old lover, who she had thought died of sunstroke in the war, she flees the garden “blindly”. Lawrence repeats himself, emphatically, at the beginning of the next sentence: “Hastening and blind”, she runs home (128).

But it is not just metaphors of disablement and injury that pervade Lawrence’s depiction of this temporal collision. In this splintered modernity, people are not themselves. The law of identity loosens. “It was as if some membrane had been torn in two in her, so that she was not an entity that could think and feel” (*PO* 128). At this point, safe in her bedroom but no less endangered by memory, her identity is already dual; in the garden, her ex-lover says, twice, that he knows her – he declares to the groundskeeper that she is “a friend of mine” (128) – but his eyes betray his removal to “another world” (126). The governing, titular metaphor of shadow marks yet another schism: between the self and the matte, unknowing blackness of history that trails the self whenever it meets light. The shadow, the always-potentially-present accompaniment of any entity extended in space, can, like the past, vanish and reappear. Like a reflection – examined by the husband in a mirror in the story’s first scene – it lingers, only sometimes seen. The story’s final split is between husband and wife, whose

union, fractured from the start, ends with Frank's verbal repetition of his seizing the apple: "I want to know", he tells his wife (130).

What led him to favour the crooked apple tree over the Tree of Heaven, *Ailanthus altissima*? Having just inspected his own physiognomy in the cottage's mirror and found it satisfactory, was this a bit of condescending pity, or a correct intuition of what was to come: that knowledge, once gained, would not be of the beautiful and false, but of the deformed and true? Was it a practical refutation of Kant's claim that, from the "crooked wood" of humanity, no straight thing could ever be built?<sup>3</sup> When this knowledge arrives, both can barely stand it; at the story's close, both are silent, unable to speak, their understanding ringing out clear as crystal. He rejects her unvirginal timber, as she has already rejected him. Husband, wife and lover all reach the story's end in possession of a version of what Erving Goffman described as identity spoiled by stigma.<sup>4</sup>

Anthony Burgess, in *Flame into Being*, attests that Lawrence thought he was going mad several times during the Great War.<sup>5</sup> Written in late 1907 – more than ten years before Virginia Woolf, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, would give us Septimus Smith, shell-shocked veteran of the First World War – 'The Shadow in the Rose Garden' gives us a figure of trauma in a setting that recalls the twentieth chapter of *Jane Eyre*, about which Lawrence had been thinking (*PO* 263 n.122:1). Lawrence was no stranger to disability, even if he would not have used that term to describe the varied forms of his own madness. Dorothy Brett, Lawrence's close friend and "disciple", recorded the social agony her deafness incurred her in terms consonant with those of Lawrence's story.<sup>6</sup> In 1918, she wrote to Bertrand Russell that, were it not for her painting, she would commit suicide. "I am just the shadow of a human being", she notes, lamenting her relegation – like that of Archie – to the realm of the no-longer-human.<sup>7</sup>

While physical disability furnished Lawrence with a symbolic vocabulary for mental disturbances, it was the latter that, particularly in *The Prussian Officer*, obsessed him. The collection's

title story is likewise one of madness tinged with repression, of double lives and shadow lives, of selves divided. An orderly, subjected to the frustrated advances of his captain – whose hands, like those of Frank and the wife’s old lover, tremble – murders him. In the trance-like state he enters after the act, in which he eventually wanders and dies of thirst, his body and mind diverge. He finds himself on the edge of a clearing where trees, “stripped and glistening, lay stretched like naked, brown-skinned bodies” (PO 13). The racially-tinged simile disappears in the story’s final image – of the felled trees of two bodies, the captain’s and the orderly’s, laid side-by-side in the morgue.

In his *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, Lawrence waxes arboreal, imagining “the powerful sap-scented blood roaring up the great columns. A vast individual life, and an overshadowing will. The will of a tree. Something that frightens you” (PFU 38). At the end of their garden encounter, the wife’s ex-lover remarks that he must leave at once: “The owl is coming” (PO 127). Someone’s nickname, he clarifies, but Hegel’s Owl of Minerva has already begun winging its way from the chthonic depths of Lawrentian mythology to alight in the rose garden. That owl, philosophy’s objective correlative, infamously takes flight only at dusk; the fruits of the intellect’s labours are necessarily late and retrospective.<sup>8</sup> The knowledge imparted by history, to the wife by the ex-lover and to the husband by the wife, always arrives too late. What ‘The Shadow in the Rose Garden’ allegorises is less the jarring reunion of history and understanding than both the preface and postface to that reunion; the reunion itself, like the knowledge of the past that Frank seeks but cannot withstand, is too horrible for the wife to bear. She thus banishes herself from the garden that does not merely represent her past but, with all its bright blooms and crooked wood, *is* her past.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Keith Cushman, ‘D. H. Lawrence at Work: “The Shadow in the Rose Garden”’, *D. H. Lawrence Review* 8.1 (1975), 31–6.

<sup>2</sup> Brian H. Finney, 'D. H. Lawrence's Progress to Maturity: From Holograph Manuscript to Final Publication of *The Prussian Officer and Other Stories*', *Studies in Bibliography* 28 (1975), 321–32, 327.

<sup>3</sup> Immanuel Kant, 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim', *Kant's Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim*, eds Amélie Oksenberg Rorty and James Schmidt (Cambridge UP, 2009), 16.

<sup>4</sup> Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963), 71.

<sup>5</sup> Anthony Burgess, *Flame into Being: The Life and Work of D. H. Lawrence* (London: Abacus/Sphere, 1985), 62.

<sup>6</sup> Frances Wilson, *Burning Man: The Ascent of D. H. Lawrence* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021).

<sup>7</sup> Sean Hignett, *Brett: From Bloomsbury to New Mexico* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1983), 51.

<sup>8</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, 'Preface', in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen W. Wood, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991), 9–23, 23. In 1908 Lawrence wrote of a "great purpose" that "keeps the menagerie moving onward to better places, while the animals snap and rattle by the way" (*IL* 57). Elsewhere he denied belief in social evolution, but one might find here a perverse reformulation of Hegel's life of Reason in terms of animal instinct and desire; if so, it is unclear whether the Boer War, from whose battlefields the shadow in the rose garden returned wounded, formed part of "the march" Lawrence wanted to help along.

<sup>9</sup> Cushman, 'D. H. Lawrence at Work', 39.

### **'A SICK COLLIER'**

HOWARD J. BOOTH

'A Sick Collier' is a Lawrence short story that has received very little attention. Part of the reason is no doubt that working people who speak in dialect are held by some not to be as worthy of attention as the experiences of members of other classes, but we will not let such narrowness and prejudice detain us here. A young miner, Willy Horsepool, is living a "very happy" life with his wife

(*PO* 166), Lucy, when he has an accident at work six weeks before the start of the 1912 national Miners' Strike (269 n.167:12; 168). His initial recovery is limited. The story builds to him attacking his wife because he believes that she is somehow responsible for his "peen" – "pain" in the dialect (170). His wife worries about whether his compensation payments will continue.

Written when Lawrence was back living in Eastwood, after severe illness and leaving his teaching job in Croydon, 'A Sick Collier' is one of the stories and sketches that Lawrence produced in response to the Miners' Strike. He was already detaching himself from his late mother's views and positions; that did not only start to happen when Lawrence met Frieda. Though his mother's negative views of strikes and striking men were maintained by his sisters, Lawrence thought differently and participated in strike relief work (*IL* 379–80). He sought to turn his first-hand experience of a mining district to advantage by writing, and then placing in periodicals, short pieces related to the dispute. They focus on the strike's impact on life in the home. Though he had limited success getting them published, they did include narrative material that was redeployed elsewhere, most importantly in *The Daughter-in-Law*. There are also connections between the stories. Both 'A Sick Collier' and 'Strike Pay' reference striking men walking to a football match in Nottingham. Lawrence draws on a real match on Wednesday 13 March 1912 between Notts County and Aston Villa (*PO* 269 n.169:11). Horsepool deludedly believes he can join his peers, which triggers the episode of madness during which he threatens his wife.

'A Sick Collier' first appeared nearly eighteen months after the Miners' Strike ended in the 13 September 1913 issue of *The New Statesman*. Often accounts of Lawrence's periodical publications stop after considering his business dealings with the journal and issues of payment. Less attention has been given to the relationship between Lawrence's piece and what it appears alongside, and to the journal's editorial priorities and ethos. This issue of *The New Statesman* saw a focus on the perspective of workers when it comes

to labour questions. It included the second instalment of three pieces by Rowland Kenney entitled 'Discipline and Organisation in Industry'.<sup>1</sup> Kenney had had a number of labouring jobs. Reviewing a range of recent disputes, he says he could not speak with "the same certainty" about mining because "although I have lived among miners, I have not worked down a pit" (718). Lawrence had certainly never worked as a miner either, but 'A Sick Collier' can be seen as adding to the range of workers' stories and perspectives found in this issue.

Early readers of 'A Sick Collier' in *The New Statesman*, interested in social issues and progress, would have responded to Lucy's position as an exhausted carer worrying about whether the financial support would continue: "If it gets about as he's out of his mind, they'll stop his compensation, I know they will" (*PO* 171). In *The Prussian Officer* volume in the Cambridge Edition, John Worthen observes that the Workmen's Compensation Act of 1897 – which was Joseph Chamberlain's major legislative achievement – did cover mental illness. There should be no question of the discontinuation of Horsepool's support. However, as Worthen notes, it might well have been the case that "limitation or stoppage might well be feared" (269 n.171:4). As often with social reform by legislation the issue was enforcement, in this case making sure that the employer made, and then continued to make, payments. The original act had already been superseded by two further acts with the same name by 1912. *The New Statesman* had not long commenced publication as an offshoot of the Fabian Society, with a focus on politics and literature. Fabians might have responded to the story by hoping that a more organised state, led by a governing elite, would ensure people injured at work would receive the money. Indeed in 1946 an act was passed that made compensation for workplace injuries universal and administered and funded by the state. As trade unions expanded their staffing and the services they offered, they started to support their members who were having problems securing payments to which they were entitled; over time this helped foster a wider culture of compliance.

‘A Sick Collier’ was the only one of the 1912 stories arising from the Miners’ Strike to appear in *The Prussian Officer*. In his seminal study of the collection, Keith Cushman omits discussion of “the more negligible stories in the collection” to avoid “excessive detail and repetition” and because they do not feature a “revealing pattern of revision”.<sup>2</sup> ‘A Sick Collier’ is among those stories that Cushman does not discuss, but I believe that the story does have a structural role in *The Prussian Officer*. It is part of a cluster that addresses the mining community in which Lawrence grew up. It also shares with the last story, ‘Odour of Chrysanthemums’, the response to a mining accident and the change that brings. More broadly in the collection as well, sudden breaks in life lead to new insights and change lives and relationships. ‘A Sick Collier’ sees Horsepool arrested in his invalid state, and possibly deteriorating in the period when he “completely out of his mind” (PO 170) is taken as a harbinger of further such episodes.

The story can be seen in the context of Lawrence’s early interest in tragedy. In the early versions of the travel writing about walking across the Alps, later revised and included in *Twilight in Italy*, there are discussions of the peasant art and crucifixes Lawrence had seen. He is fascinated by what might end or wholly change a life, and the art that is produced to try and process such events. He would later explore ways in which formative experiences, or the wider culture, might have led to these tragic outcomes, but at this point the focus is mainly on their entirely arbitrary and unfortunate nature.

What disturbs about ‘A Sick Collier’ – and much of what stands behind its neglect is surely that we’d all rather think about something else – is its depiction of mental distress and physical suffering without explanation or the prospect of alleviation. Further revision and elaboration, which for Cushman relegates ‘A Sick Collier’ from the top table of stories in *The Prussian Officer*, would have robbed it of some of its emblematic quality. Keeping ‘A Sick Collier’ in view, however, provides us with a fuller sense of rupture and transformation in Lawrence’s stories.

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<sup>1</sup> Rowland Kenney was born into a working-class family in Springhead in the West Riding of Yorkshire. He later acted as a propagandist and diplomat in Norway during both world wars. His sister was the leading campaigner for women's suffrage, Annie Kenney.

<sup>2</sup> Keith Cushman, *D. H. Lawrence at Work: The Emergence of the 'Prussian Officer' Stories* (Charlottesville, VA: UP of Virginia, 1978), 7.

**NAVIGATING DARKNESS:  
PARADOXES OF STRENGTH AND SIGHTLESSNESS IN  
'THE BLIND MAN'**

BETHAN JONES

Occasionally I see him, silent, a little wondering  
with his ears pricked and his body wincing  
(‘As thyself—!’, *IPoems* 556).<sup>1</sup>

In this late poem, Lawrence distinguishes mechanised, modern humans from those whom he recognises as true neighbours. The characteristics described here – tentative bodily “wincing”, silent self-containment and intent, animalistic listening – are shared by Maurice Pervin, protagonist of the earlier short story ‘The Blind Man’ (written in 1918; first published in 1920). This story perceptively evokes an individual’s experience of sudden sight-loss, considering how bonds of passion and friendship may be forged, maintained or compromised within a newly dark world. Most scholars engaging with this tale have treated it symbolically, identifying profound, perceptive “seeing” within sightlessness and celebrating the transformative power of touch.<sup>2</sup> I aim to take a different approach, exploring paradoxes latent in the practical way in which blind Maurice navigates his environment.

Lawrence’s early depiction of Maurice is revealing. He is “passionate, sensitive, perhaps over-sensitive, wincing—a big

fellow with heavy limbs and a forehead that flushed painfully. For his mind was slow, as if drugged by the strong provincial blood that beat in his veins” (*EME* 48). Like Tom Brangwen, Maurice is “at home in his rural setting, at one with the animals and the land”.<sup>3</sup> When sitting at the dinner table with Isabel and Bertie, listening silently to their banter, Maurice becomes restless and escapes to the farm, retreating into close intimacy with the stabled horses. Throughout the tale, he interacts instinctively with animals. Whilst talking to Bertie, for instance, he repeatedly bends to caress a “half-wild” cat that rubs and kneads his legs (61). Like Tom, too, Maurice is acutely aware of his mental slowness, counterbalanced by feelings that are “quick and acute” (48). His capacity for heightened emotional response allows him to revel in “dark, palpable joy” (46) with Isabel on his return from Flanders. Analogously to Clifford Chatterley, he does suffer from black, annihilating depression, catalysing in Isabel (like Connie) an intense desire to escape. Yet there are fundamental differences between these couples. Maurice’s sightlessness engenders an enriching reciprocal bond with Isabel. Moreover, he is the father of her unborn child. Isabel may be fearful when in the darkness of the stable-block, unable to see her husband and too near to the invisible horses for comfort. Yet she learns to adapt and relate, “listen[ing] intently” (52) and recognising him as a “tower of darkness” (53) as she leads him towards their home.

It is not unusual for Lawrence to develop his protagonists through identifying synchronicities with animals and nature. Here, however, such attributes are unusually employed to show how blindness affects daily living. For instance, when sitting at the table, feline traits are assigned to Maurice as he “feel[s], with curious little movements, almost like a cat kneading her bed, for his plate” (*EME* 56). Hating to be assisted, Maurice repeatedly touches his food with his knife-tip, cutting “irregular bits” (57) – the adjective subtly pointing to the practical implications of sightlessness. Further details highlight Lawrence’s attunement to the impact of lost vision. When first greeting Bertie, Maurice “st[icks] his hand

out into space” (56) for the sighted man to take (the only time Bertie willingly participates in a handclasp, rather than shrinking from the touch of Maurice’s fingers). Equally, when offered a little bowl of violets to smell, Maurice holds out a hand and waits for the bowl to be placed within his grasp. When Maurice mounts the stairs to change, Isabel observes that he is unaware that the lamps are unlit above him. His navigation of the upstairs rooms – “rock[ing] ... through a world of things” (54) – reveals the extent to which he has learned the precise location of objects, so he can find and hold them without visual cues. Symbolically, terms like “unconsciously”, “pure contact” and “blood-prescience” (54) indicate the profound and transformative possibilities of this process.

Lawrence alludes to the “delicate tactile discernment” (*EME* 56) of Maurice’s large hands, highlighting a paradox latent in blindness, where robust physical health may be juxtaposed with hesitant and subtle ways of processing one’s environment. This paradox is also revealed by Maurice’s gait. Despite his assurance in feeling for doors and knowing where obstacles are positioned, he still proceeds with a “curious tentative movement of his powerful, muscular legs” and “waver[s]” (53) as he enters the house-passage. Isabel refers to the contact of his feet with the earth as both “clever” and “careful” (53). Maurice tends to walk with his face raised and searching, using sound as well as touch to orientate him. His hearing has become “too much sharpened” (55), however, indicating an almost painful over-sensitivity as his remaining senses compensate for the non-functioning eyes.

While Maurice is frequently associated with silence, he finds his voice at the end of the tale. Unlike Clifford, he is given a chance to articulate anxiety about his disability and his wife’s state of mind, asking ““is my face much disfigured?”” (*EME* 61). He needs someone other than Isabel to describe his scar, highlighting Bertie’s crucial role as addressee. While Maurice is appealing in his vulnerability and openness, Bertie is explicitly condemned for the “insane reserve” (63) that sees him “crumbl[ing] under ... enforced

closeness”.<sup>4</sup> Like Gerald Crich, he is marked out as a “denier” (*WL* 480), failing to accept Maurice’s Birkin-esque pledge of friendship. In a last ironic twist to the story, Maurice’s blindness prevents him from seeing that Bertie is “haggard, with sunken eyes” (*EME* 63), his elation contrasting starkly with the sighted other man’s misery.

In conveying the day-to-day experience of sight-loss, Lawrence’s story is both nuanced and profound. More broadly, he conveys the turbulent, oscillating tangle of emotions resulting from sudden disablement and the ensuing, fiercely resented dependency. Unlike Clifford, Maurice’s prospects in marriage remain hopeful. Yet the possibility of a supplementary, tactile intimacy with another man – exposed to him with sudden, epiphanic intensity – recedes beyond his grasp.

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<sup>1</sup> The previous poem in *The ‘Nettles’ Notebook* is titled ‘Love thy Neighbour—’ (*IPoems* 555).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Stephen Rowley, ‘Darkness: “The Blind Man”’s Third Eye’, *Etudes Lawrenciennes* 13 (1996) and James C. Cowan, ‘D. H. Lawrence and Touch’, *D. H. Lawrence Review* 18.2–3 (1985), 121–37.

<sup>3</sup> Maren Linett, ‘Blindness and Intimacy in Early-Twentieth-Century Literature’, *Mosaic: an Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 46.3 (2013), 27–42, 36; cf. *R* 9–10 and 17.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

**‘THE HORSE-DEALER’S DAUGHTER’**

JOHN WORTHEN

“I send you the MS. of another story – ‘The Miracle’, which is beautiful and ends happily, so the swine of people ought to be very thankful for it” (3L 74). So starts Lawrence’s sour letter to J. B. Pinker written, I think, on “Friday” 22 December 1916, celebrating the first piece of fiction he completed after finishing *Women in Love*. But Pinker was unable to place the story, and it came back to Lawrence in 1920, when Pinker handed over material he still possessed. Finally, in October 1921, Lawrence told his diary how he had “written over The Miracle story” and had sent it for typing as ‘The Horse-Dealers Daughter’ (EME xlv).

That change, though, perhaps records its new certainty about the everyday world. Jack Fergusson, a young doctor, suffering from a heavy cold, is intimate with a family which used to deal in horses but which has gone bust: “there was nothing but debt and threatening”. It’s recognisably the same family as the Mayhews in *The White Peacock*; the young men, Fergusson’s few friends in town, are all on the point of leaving. Only the daughter, “brutally proud, reserved” (EME 142), refuses to offer any plans about what she will do, suffering as she does the disaster of a woman’s life now without a home and with only the goal of caring for her mother’s grave.

She leaves the house that afternoon only to go and clean and tidy the grave (I keep using the word “only” but the story is about an intensely solitary woman with pride only for one blindly taken way forward). Fergusson, hurrying on his way to the surgery, sees her again in the churchyard, across a distance, “intent and remote” (EME 143). Their eyes meet, and for a moment Fergusson feels life come back into him, “delivered from his own fretted, daily life” (144). But he hurries on, “in perpetual haste”.

Later that afternoon, though, on his way to visit patients, Fergusson glances across the fields and sees her again distantly in view, walking down the hill behind her family's house: "she moved, direct and intent, like something transmitted rather than stirring in voluntary activity". In such language we participate in how Fergusson sees her, but as he watches, she walks straight into the pond at the bottom of the slope. He runs desperately towards her, "over the wet, soddened fields", finally plunging into the "dead cold" water: "the bottom was so deeply soft and uncertain, he was afraid of pitching with his mouth underneath" (*EME* 145). It is all terribly real and brilliantly realised. He finds a handful of clothing, drags her out of the pond, gets the water out of her, gets her to breathe, staggers with her up to the house. It is empty but a fire is burning; he lays her on the hearthrug, gets the clothes off her, dries her and wraps her in blankets, finally gives her some whisky. She comes round and, looking him full in the face, asks "What did I do?". He tells her. "Was I out of my mind?" (147), she asks.

An extraordinary dialogue follows, with Fergusson desperate to get his soaking clothes off – "He could not bear the smell of the dead, clayey water, and he was mortally afraid for his own health" – while also fixated by her and these startling questions. "Maybe, for the moment", he tells her (*EME* 147). And so on. Asking the simple questions, telling the simple truths, is all that occupies them.

She sits up, becomes aware that she is naked under the blankets, her clothes lying where Fergusson threw them. "Who undressed me?", she asks, looking straight at him. "I did", he replies, "to bring you round" (*EME* 148). It's a wonderfully pertinent answer. Does undressing someone restore them to consciousness? As if only then, naked, they might have access to their real selves and real desires? In a story full of distances, it is a startling reminder of what intimacy might be like.

She looks at him, lips parted, and says, "Do you love me then?" (*EME* 148). Fergusson cannot answer the question: not as a doctor, not as a man. It is, of course, a mad question, but it takes us straight into a world of un- or semi-conscious motivation. The story

is in fact, at moments, an incongruous comedy, in which people are shown either distant and unwilling, or going startlingly to what they instinctively want. As a result, they feel ripped open, in danger of total exposure; and at this point in the story all the normal barriers of gender, class, discretion, modesty are down. She stares at him; he stares at her, “fascinated”. She shuffles forward and presses her breasts against him “with strange, convulsive certainty”. And she is murmuring, “You love me, I know you love me, I know” (*EME* 148). Still absolutely pertinent, though crazy.

They embrace as she draws him down; she is sobbing with – what? Relief? Terror? She goes upstairs trailing blankets and throws clothes down to him; they both get dressed. Now they are “shy of one another”, as social roles are resumed, and she doubts everything; her hair smells, she sobs and says “I feel I’m horrible to you” and “You can’t want to love me”. But he is also crazy, and insists “we’re going to be married, quickly, quickly – tomorrow if I can”. In this world of feeling and desire, what he says is utterly right; in the everyday world, it is perfectly incongruous. His murmuring, “I want you, I want you”, frightens her terribly, “almost more than her horror lest he should *not* want her” (*EME* 152).

And so it ends, wryly, comically, seriously. We are left with a feeling of loss; those wonderful, unexpected passages are over when these two unlikely people come together. We are back in the everyday, fretted world, anxious and insecure. But the experience of the other was wonderful. Positively miraculous.

## **SOLAR RECOGNITION: D. H. LAWRENCE’S ‘SUN’**

RONALD GRANOFSKY

In *The Bonds of Love*, Jessica Benjamin provides a useful definition of recognition from the perspective of a developing sense of self: “Recognition is that response from the other which makes meaningful the feelings, intentions, and actions of the self. It allows

the self to realize its agency and authorship in a tangible way”.<sup>1</sup> She speaks of “the infant cry in the adult voice” of those deprived of such crucial acknowledgment in early life, individuals “who feel dead and empty” or inauthentic.<sup>2</sup> In her argument, Benjamin uses a metaphor that is highly suggestive when thinking of D. H. Lawrence’s exploration of the topic. She compares recognition to sunlight in the process of photosynthesis, which “provides the energy for the plant’s constant transformation of substance”.<sup>3</sup> In Lawrence’s story ‘Sun’ we read of how Juliet, in ill health, angry and frustrated, with her young son in tow, arrives in Sicily, in accordance with medical advice to seek the sun for restoration. Her marriage with Maurice seems to be failing, and, although we can only speculate as to why exactly that is, there does seem to be a mutual lack of recognition in the relationship and a feeling of inauthenticity on her part. We learn, for example, of Juliet’s “incapacity to feel anything real” (WWRA 20).

In Sicily, Juliet inhabits a house with a vast terraced garden and a view of “pure green reservoirs of water” (WWRA 20). It is as if she were a plant herself: her breasts are fruit that “would never ripen”; with leaves over her eyes, she lies naked, “like a long gourd in the sun, green that must ripen to gold” (21). Gradually, her anxiety disappears “like a flower that falls in the Sun, and leaves only a little ripening fruit” while her womb is likened to a bud slowly unfolding (23). Significantly, she feels recognised: the sun “could shine on a million people, and still be the radiant, splendid, unique sun, focussed on her alone”, and she feels that it is “penetrating her to *know* her” (23), sexuality and recognition coupled here in typically Lawrentian fashion. She feels “appreciated” by the sun and is gradually transformed, her skin colour darkening as if through a process of human photosynthesis: “She was like another person. She *was* another person” (24). So that she can say to herself “I am another being” (27).

Satisfied with her photosynthetic transformation, Juliet “refused to think outside her garden” (WWRA 28). However, there is a serpent within this seeming paradise. Maurice’s intrusion, indeed, is

foreshadowed when Juliet and her little boy encounter a snake one day, while, on a surprise visit, Maurice brings not only a serpentine element into Juliet's paradise but also a different colour scheme to the vegetative green and gold imagery that has been associated with her transformation. He is "a man of forty, grey-faced, very quiet and really shy" (32), and he seems decidedly out of place here "in his dark-grey suit and pale grey hat, and his grey, monastic face ... and his grey mercantile mentality" (33). Clearly Maurice himself is in need of, if not quite ready for, transformation.

Recognition is a two-way street, and Juliet, hearing that Maurice has arrived unexpectedly, seems unwilling even to acknowledge him: "Your husband has come", the housekeeper Marinin' tells her. "What husband?" she replies (*WWRA* 31). For his part, Maurice, while anxious for recognition – "Hello Johnny!" he says to his son, "Do you know Daddy? Do you know Daddy, Johnny?" (33) – seems unable to look directly at his wife in her nakedness: "Maurice, poor fellow, hesitated and glanced away from her, turning his face aside" (32). His averting his face from his wife's naked body is clearly in contrast to the steady male gaze of a local peasant who has been longingly watching her sunbathe, a gaze which Juliet herself equates with the sun (30). For this Juliet, the sun by any other name would warm as well. As various commentators have noted, the interpersonal triangle here is, in the words of Michael L. Ross, "an intriguing parallel-in-miniature" to what occurs in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, except that Lawrence apparently cannot quite imagine the kind of Connie-Mellors illicit relationship here despite Juliet's desire to have a child with the peasant rather than with her husband.<sup>4</sup> What matters is the peasant's recognition of her and her sexuality. The effect of his gaze on her is similar to the feeling she gets from the sun, focusing on her alone, appreciating her, penetrating to know her.

While this story centres on a woman's need for recognition and on her reawakened sexuality, ultimately, the human need for recognition in adulthood always goes back to the mother-child dyad and the child's developing sense of self. While that dyad is just

touched upon in this story, it is not Johnny's development we are concerned with, although his presence serves to remind us of the vulnerability of childhood. The tale is concerned with Juliet and her needs. Nevertheless, Lawrence was more than capable of identifying with his female creations, and in Juliet's search for recognition Lawrence is, on one level, delving into his own psychological traces. That this is the case is strongly suggested by yet one more colour that is significant in the scheme of the story, a colour that signals a link to Lawrence's own emotional struggles.

The colour blue would seem to be badly out of place among the greens and golds of Juliet's transformation and the contrasting grey of Maurice's presence, but it is emotionally appropriate. The sun has "blue pulsing roundness" and a "blue body of fire" that envelops Juliet (*WWRA* 21). The Sicilian peasant looks at her with "the strange challenge of his eyes ... blue and overwhelming like the blue sun's heart" (30). She feels the "sudden blue heat pouring over her from his kindled eyes" (38). As I have suggested elsewhere, blue for Lawrence was often associated with his mother and her blue eyes, the original source of recognition in his life and a force that continued to matter to him.<sup>5</sup> In the essay '[Return to Bestwood]', for example, Lawrence writes of his visit to his home town of Eastwood in 1926. He complains of the "hazed, dazed, uncanny sunless sunniness" he experiences (*LEA* 16) and fantasises speaking to his long-dead mother. But the fantasy mother withholds recognition: "Do look! And do look at me, and see if I'm not a gentleman! Do say that I'm almost upper class!", Lawrence implores his dead mother. "But the dear little ghost says never a word" (*LEA* 19).

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<sup>1</sup> Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination* (New York: Pantheon, 1988), 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>4</sup> Michael L. Ross, 'Lawrence's Second "Sun"', *D. H. Lawrence Review* 8.1 (1975), 1–18, 4; Keith Sagar, *The Art of D.H. Lawrence* (Cambridge:

Cambridge UP, 1966), 175; Jeffrey Meyers, *D. H. Lawrence: A Biography* (New York: Vintage, 1992), 354.

<sup>5</sup> Ronald Granofsky, *D. H. Lawrence and Attachment* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 2022), 172 and 217–18 n.12.

**“IN SPITE OF THE GLOW”:  
D. H. LAWRENCE’S ‘THE BORDER-LINE’**

IRENA YAMBOLIEV

Stained glass is beautiful. It glows and transforms interior spaces and, often, soothes. Dynamic and magical, it can put us in a sacred space of mind when we encounter it in a profane space such as a library or yoga studio. What could it be doing in a hideous setting like ‘The Border-Line’? Stained glass – in the form of an impressive fourteenth-century rose window – is a part of Strasbourg Cathedral (or Strasbourg Minster), a key site in the journey that Katharine Farquhar takes from London to Baden-Baden to rejoin her husband in the wake of the Great War. The Minster is where Katharine is intercepted by the vengeful ghost of her late husband, Alan, who will linger to the story’s violent end. Lawrence mentions the Cathedral’s stained glass once, and only to say what the glass *does not* do. In stark contrast to the church windows that occur in other of Lawrence’s works, here the windows leave Katharine unmoved. Are they not beautiful? Both surviving versions of ‘The Border-Line’ – an autograph version from Lawrence’s 1924 notebook and one revised and expanded for publication in *The Woman Who Rode Away and Other Stories* in 1928 (see *WWRA* lvi) – include changes to the moment of her encounter with the glass: the changes are small but telling.

The earlier version reads: “In the church, she felt chilled and repelled. She did not like the white colour [of the walls], nor the high, hard, pointed arches. And the stained glass which she

remembered from the past gave her hardly any thrill now. Its colour failed to move her” (WWRA 288). The narration says nothing about the glass panes themselves – what they depict or their colours – and instead focuses entirely on how Katharine reacts to them and, more specifically, on the discrepancy between her past experience of the glass and her current immunity to it. The revised version of this moment explicitly characterises the glass as glowing – makes it active, actively lit-up – which heightens the contrast between Katharine’s reception of it and the reaction that might otherwise seem fitting: “Inside, the church was cold and repellent, in spite of the glow of stained glass” (87). This glass is utterly subjective, and the next sentence makes clear in very personal terms why the glow holds no charm for Katharine: “he was nowhere to be found”. It is the morning after Alan’s ghost had first appeared to Katharine. She has gone looking for him again, but she does not find him. Nor does she find any warmth in the medium of these windows she had once loved.

Stained glass is a “borderline” artform, seeming to mark a boundary between the inside of a building and its outside, yet blurring that boundary when it sends colourful light projecting outward from the pane and into an interior. In ‘The Border-Line’, it also complements the blurred boundary between the outside and inside of minds, Katharine’s and perhaps even her current husband Philip’s, between what is real and what they are imagining or projecting. We are told that Katharine “was in that state when a woman hardly differentiates between psychic and commonplace experience” (WWRA 288). What the stained glass makes very real in this moment is how intent Katharine is on looking for and dwelling with Alan’s ghost – she is being haunted – so much so that she is not available to be moved and warmed by the glowing light. The glass, her reaction to it, marks her apartness.

What does it mean that Lawrence “returns” to this old art-form, that inspired him in the earlier part of his career, after the war? In *The Rainbow*, about which I have written elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> Lawrence imagines stained glass with a profoundly positive connotation and

portrays it as a life-enabling force, a model of meshing that tempers intensities and makes them survivable. But what of this robust metaphoric grammar remains by 1924? Not much, I would say. Instead, 'The Border-Line' jumps backward in time to recall the associations that Lawrence developed in the first piece of fiction in which he treated this medium, his early story 'A Fragment of Stained Glass' (written in 1908, published 1911). The stained glass in the later story invites us to notice multiple resonances with the earlier story.

Lawrence carries through the earlier's evocation of the creature-like quality of the church, and of the shared culture that it espouses and that emanates from it, outward toward passersby who see it, netting them in its overweening embrace. Lawrence has his main character describe Strasbourg Cathedral in terms of its great height ("Up it went ... Up it went"), its shadowiness, its redness, and its quality of bodiliness. In the early version, Katharine describes it as "like a living body" (*WWRA* 286); in the later as being "of reddish stone, that had a flush in the darkness, like dark flesh" (84). In both versions the rose window is positioned at its breast: "The great rose window, poised high, seemed like the breast of the vast Thing, and prisms and needles of stone shot up, as if it were plumage, dimly, half-visible in heaven" in the later version (84), making even more organic and alive what had, in the earlier version, been a "great, dusky, elaborate façade, with the dark needles of stone shooting up to the great rose window, which was like the breast of the incredibly tall building" (286). The red, ruddy quality is something Lawrence ports from 'A Fragment of Stained Glass'. But with a difference: in that story the reddish glow had emanated from a piece of red glass; in 'The Border-Line' the ruddiness emanates from the sandstone itself.<sup>2</sup> Even without light propelling it, the building's redness penetrates the surrounding atmosphere, only here it is conveyed by the ghost, who is similarly "blood-dusky".

This redness is emphasised again and again, a quality of bloodiness suffusing the Cathedral, the ghost, and, by the story's end, the bodies of those on whom he's come to take his revenge.

The Cathedral is “dark in the night like blood, a vast sharp-pinioned blood-cloud over the town” in the earlier version (*WWRA* 286); in the revision, it appears “looming with a faint rust of blood”, “And an ancient, indomitable blood seemed to stir in it ... the great blood-creature waiting, implacable and eternal, ready at last to crush our white brittleness and let the shadowy blood move erect once more, in a new implacable pride and strength” (85). Violent and erotic. Kathleen Verduin details the mythology Lawrence develops about the full-blooded leaders of ancient societies, that inform his evocations of the Medieval period, in ‘A Fragment of Stained Glass’ and throughout his oeuvre, and also points out that Strasbourg Cathedral is more phallic than Lawrence’s other churches.<sup>3</sup> The rule by blood that the red colour stands for in both ‘A Fragment’ and ‘The Border-Line’ seems an outgrowth of an older time, one that has been visited upon this modern day to devastating effects. Lawrence writes of Katharine that, as she gazes on the Cathedral, “Mystery and dim, ancient fear came over the woman’s soul” (85).

One way or another, stained glass is for Lawrence a route into Katharine’s subjective experience and into her interpretation of the blasted land- and cityscapes that she’s traveling through. The main characters in ‘A Fragment of Stained Glass’ were Medieval English serfs, made out to be a sort of mythical people, and the people in ‘The Border-Line’ feel mythical too, standing in for ethnic types writ large (French, Germans, Scots). One role of stained glass in this context seems to be to liken the desperate post-war present, “wintry and smitten” as Lawrence describes it in a letter to his editors (qtd. *WWRA* xxv), to the Medieval past – and to reveal the present to be similarly ignorant and brutish. For Lawrence, that fact is frightening and paralyzing.

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<sup>1</sup> Irena Yamboliev, ‘D. H. Lawrence’s Stained Glass’, *Twentieth Century Literature* 67.1 (2021), 1–30.

<sup>2</sup> Another stylistic feature that likens the two stories is their archaic and estranging exclamations of “Ah!”. In ‘A Fragment of Stained Glass’: “Ah, no!”; “Could one catch such—Ah, no!”; “Ah, [...] this is magic”; and “Ah, give it to me” (*PO* 93, 94, 96). Similarly, in “The Border-Line”: “‘Ah, no!’ she said to herself (*WWRA* 87).

<sup>3</sup> Kathleen Verduin, ‘Lawrence and the Middle Ages’, *D. H. Lawrence Review* 18.2–3 (1986), 169–81, 177.

**‘THE WOMAN WHO RODE AWAY’  
AS ANIMISTIC FABLE**

TERRY GIFFORD

A month before writing this story Lawrence had written, “[We] can understand the consciousness of the Indian only in terms of the death of our consciousness” (*MM* 61). He was trying to explain his understanding of animism whilst recognising his own limitations in doing so. As a white Western writer Lawrence could only explore this different “way of consciousness” in his own terms, with his traditional mode of fable, where the apparently realistic has significance at a symbolic level and his European system of iconography in which the stars have significance rather than “the spaces between” them (61). But in the spirit of a “thought-adventure” he set out to test his ability to express his understanding in this animistic fable by asking: what if an unnamed “spoilt white woman” (47) were to lose the Western categories of “self” and “other”, “human” and “nature”, even “religion” and “sacrifice”, and accept an animistic, posthuman connectedness with the universe through ritual in a specially powerful moment in a specially powerful place? Can a Western writer collapse the boundaries that prevent access to an understanding of Mexican “Indian” ways of living within a natural world where death is creation?

First, he accepts the limitations of his position by telling the story from the Western woman's perspective, so that any understanding of the Indians' "way of consciousness" can be deduced only by what they say and do. Second, with understandable fear and hesitancy, the woman chooses the gradual death of her Western consciousness, including her sense of herself as a sexually attractive woman. She knows that she is in a sort of "victimised state" but is both "relaxed" and "confused" about it, gaining benefits from the "sweetened herb drinks" that she does not refuse to accept (*WWRA* 62). So, thirdly, Lawrence repeatedly emphasises a point that is ignored by most critics, that is "the only state of consciousness she really recognised: this exquisite sense of bleeding out into the higher beauty and harmony of things" (62). It may be a strategic mistake to use the Western mystical phrases associated with theosophy – "higher beauty" and the repeated use of "mystic" – but Lawrence does try to make this state of environmental connectedness both sensual and dramatically heightened by physical apprehensions. She could hear the movement of the stars "as they trod in perfect ripples, like bells on the floor of heaven" and she could "smell the sweetness of the moon relaxing to the sun in the wintry heaven" (62–3). Lawrence knew that plant knowledge was used to achieve these heightened states that transgress the boundaries of Western rationalism, which the woman undoubtedly enjoys. Lawrence rather undermines the seriousness of this state of environmental consciousness by describing her eyes in her final state as underlined by "the wan markings for her drugged weariness" (68).

There is also, perhaps, a heavy-handed quality to the young Indian's explanation of his culture's animistic understanding of the balances between the sun, moon and stars which acts as a fable within this fable. The woman is told of her role of reconciliation for colonialism's arrogant ignorance of the ways of the natural world that is a threat to Indian consciousness. But, again, Lawrence tries to imagine a cosmology that is quite different from Western expectations. "White men don't know what they are doing with the

sun, and white women don't know what they do with the moon" (WWRA 62). Part of this ignorance is reflected in the Western valuing of the stars for their brightness at the expense of considering the value of the black space necessary to keep them apart. When it is explained that "our men are the fire and the daytime, and our women are the spaces between the stars at night", the woman asks, "Aren't the women even stars?", shocked at the displacement of her Western cultural iconography. The answer is, "White people know nothing. They are like children with toys" (61). She finally comes to declare, "I am dead already. What difference does it make, the transition from the dead I am, to the dead I shall be, very soon!" (68).

It is not uncommon in the natural world for creatures – from bees to salmon – to give up their lives in the interest of the procreation of the species as a whole. But it is a challenge for the Western reader to accept the self-sacrifice of the individual – especially a white woman – for the regeneration of an indigenous culture. She gives herself to them and they see this as a regenerative opportunity. This is the meaning of the animistic fable of the stars told to the woman by the young Indian. The moment when the sun will pierce the icicle and reach the back of the cave marks the beginning of spring. In what we call an "animistic" culture it is a category error to call this a "religious" moment since there is no such category in this culture. It is significant, and in some respects necessary, that a female is willing to be killed by male "priests" in a ritual of regeneration. Understood as a self-sacrifice by the birth-giver to regenerate an animistic community this is the opposite of the misogyny of which this story is often accused. Lawrence is challenging his readers to suspend their "white" point of view". Yet he has the woman perceive her ultimately willing fate at the hands of the Indians whose culture she wanted to know, through the use of terms like "malignancy" (WWRA 61), "savage" (68) and "barbaric" (70).

The final irony is Lawrence's assertion of the Indians' sense of willed regeneration through their ritual sacrifice. He seems to be

suggesting in the story's final line that even humans who relate to the natural world through animistic belief succumb to the desire for mastery over its processes: "The mastery that man must hold, that passes from race to race" (*WWRA* 71). It may be Lawrence's fundamental misunderstanding of Native American culture, displayed in his reading of the Hopi Snake Dance, that it is about the "conquest" of nature that is parallel to Western hubris: "We dam the Nile and take the railway across America ... To each sort of man his own achievement, his own victory, his own conquest" (*MM* 93). The last line, whilst criticising Western hubris, also confirms Lawrence's failure to be able to step outside his own "way of consciousness" by seeing conquest and control of natural processes as at the bottom of Native Mexican animism.