

**THE IMAGERY OF NATURE IN THE PROSE WORKS
OF K. PAUSTOVSKY**

by

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STATEMENT

I, KEH KRAMER, declare that the thesis titled 'The imagery of nature in the prose works of K. Paustovsky' is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of references.

KEH KRAMER

Signed on 12 June 2012 at Pretoria

NOTES

1. Unless indicated otherwise, the Russian texts have been translated by the researcher.
2. Throughout the thesis all titles of Konstantin Paustovsky's works are given in English. They are listed in the Appendix followed by their Russian equivalents.
3. A French dictionary of international symbolism, *Le dictionnairy des symbols* has been used, as a Russian one could not be obtained.

SUMMARY

This study relies on ecocriticism as the discipline benefitting the analysis of the imagery of nature in Konstantin Paustovsky's prose. The objective of this approach is to demonstrate that Paustovsky's prose goes beyond of what was expected from a Soviet writer by the socialist realist dogma. This thesis attempts to prove that an ecocritical approach validates his prose as being universal in its message and thus relevant to contemporary readers.

Scholars of ecocriticism ask the following questions when analysing a nature-orientated prose: what values are expressed in nature-orientated literature, does the portrayal of nature reflects the cultural values of a nation as well as the way in which a person's interaction with his natural environment enhances or hampers his spiritual development.

The timeframe, within which Paustovsky wrote his prose, should be taken into account, because it coincides with the Lenin and Stalin regimes, when any criticism of the government including its nature conservation policies was impossible. The analysis of attitudes of the Russian people towards nature in Paustovsky's prose demonstrates that it evolved from the acceptance of the official stand to the one of criticism.

This research resulted in the following conclusions: Firstly Paustovsky's view with regard to ecological problems and his solutions to these problems are on par with those of modern ecologists. The writer, for example, proposes a holistic way to undertake nature conservation, such as replacing ruined forests by the same type of trees, not interfering in the cycles of nature and stresses the importance of scientific information on how to care of the natural environment. Secondly, it is through his presentation of nature that the author familiarises the reader with the essence of the Russian culture, which is totally intertwined with the manifestations of Russian nature, such as folklore, superstitions,

cultural traditions and values attached to certain animals and trees Thirdly, it has been established that the 'external' natural landscape of a person namely his environment, undoubtedly influences his 'internal landscape', his psyche. This implies that the natural environment of a person will have an influence on his psychological make-up.

It is assumed that this study, in particular the use of ecocriticism as a tool to analyse literature where nature plays a role, will shed new light on the role of nature in Russian prose. This is especially the case with regard to the way in which ecological issues such as nature conservation are treated.

KEYWORDS

Anthropocentric
Bio-centric
Biosphere
Communism
Ecocriticism
Ecological ethics
Ecological holism
Ecosophy
Environmental awareness
Inner landscape
Literature of place
Natural environment
Outer landscape
Paustovsky
Socialist realism

I love my country with a strange love: my reason cannot fathom it.
Neither glory, purchased with blood, nor peace,
Steeped in proud confidence, nor the cherished traditions of the dim past
will stir pleasant fancies within me. But I love – I know not why –
the cold silence of her plains, the swaying of her boundless
forests, her flooded rivers wide as the seas; I love to gallop
along a country track in a cart, and peering slowly through the darkness
of night and longing for a shelter, to come upon the scattered.

– Lermontov, 'My country'

INTRODUCTION

The body of literary criticism that considers the subject of the imagery of nature in Konstantin Paustovsky's prose is quite substantial. It is, however, not as extensive as the literary criticism on his contemporaries, such as Prishvin (1873–1954) and Bunin (1870–1953), in whose works nature also plays a prominent role. Moreover, a closer analysis of this criticism of Paustovsky's work reveals its uniform, repetitive and stereotypical approach. Most scholars and critics alike consider him to be just another writer who adhered to Soviet policies that held sway in Russia in particular from the 1920s to the 1940s. This thesis proposes that such a view is inconsistent with the values underpinning his work, and does not acknowledge that it highlights the many facets of the bond between the Russian people and their natural environment. Paustovsky is considered by some literary critics as a writer who was apt in portraying the essence of Russian nature through his masterful use of the imagery of nature, just as many of his predecessors, such as Turgenev (1818–1883). However, notwithstanding his expressive portrayal of nature, many critics consider him to be a somewhat obsolete Soviet writer whose works no longer merit an in-depth analysis and currently only slant reference is made to his prose in textbooks on Russian literature.

Although the views contained in the existing scholarship on Paustovsky no doubt have some legitimacy from a temporal perspective, they seem to be limited to a restricted critical approach. The research undertaken in this study will explore the hypothesis that this approach is becoming outdated in the 21st century because of the growing ecological awareness, which is a world-wide phenomenon, and the development of the new discipline of ecocriticism. An extensive overview of ecocriticism is given in Chapter One, therefore only a few basic principles are mentioned here.

Ecocriticism saw the light of day in the beginning of the 1990s as the study of the relationship between literature and the natural environment. Cheryll Glotfelty¹ was one of the first academics to define the concepts of this discipline. According to her, literary criticism in general examines the relationship between writers, texts and the world. She contends that in most literary theories the world is synonymous with society, that is, the social sphere. Ecocriticism expands the notion of the world to include the entire ecosphere. It asks questions such as what are the values expressed in literary works where nature features, are they consistent with ecological wisdom and are there any hidden clues in a text with regard to the ecological condition of the environment. Ecocriticism studies the way in which the imagery of nature in a literary work reflects the cultural values of a society. It also explores the link between nature and the state of mind of the protagonists of a literary work. Up to present the Russian interest in this discipline seems to be limited to referring to foreign research, in particular that done in the US. To my knowledge no literary work by a Russian writer has yet been analysed from an ecocritical angle.

These two intertwined trends of the 21st century, namely the growth of ecological consciousness and the new discipline of ecocriticism, resulted in a re-examination of literature in which nature is a major role player. As far as could be ascertained, this has not included a review of Russian literature written from the 1920s to the 1940s. The study, therefore, entails an ecocritical review of Paustovsky's works, which appear to be neglected in current literary criticism.

The research problem of this thesis is the following: although existing critiques acknowledge Paustovsky's masterful descriptions of nature, his fundamental ecological concerns about nature and the rehabilitation of the environment are overlooked. His prose is viewed as just another typical example of Soviet writing from the 1920s to the 1940s

¹ Glotfelty, C. 1996. Literary studies in an age of environmental crisis. In: *The ecocriticism reader*. Ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. Athens, London.

that to a large extent focuses on promoting the establishment of a post-revolution Russian society that is based predominantly on the development of the country's industrial capacity. The primary research question is whether Paustovsky's work has current relevance for readers. Thus, the aim of this research is to prove that when analysed from an ecocritical viewpoint, his prose is still significant in modern times. To this end, Paustovsky's skilful use of the imagery of nature in his portrayal of forests, water, the seasons of the year and the fauna and flora of Russia are explored in chapters Two to Five. These chapters are preceded by a theoretical orientation on ecocriticism in Chapter One.

It is necessary to give a short overview of Soviet ecological policies from the 1920s to the 1940s, as it coincides with Paustovsky's most prolific creative career.

Lenin came to power in Russia after the 1917 revolution. Shortly after he took over the reins of the government, he issued a decree entitled 'Land'. The decree stipulated that all forests, water and minerals were the property of the state. It is also specified that the state had priority over the use of them. A Central Administration of the Forests was established to manage forestation. The forests were divided into an exploitable sector and a protected one. The latter sector was used to conduct scientific experiments, such as the prevention of erosion, the protection of water basins and the conservation of the heritage of Russia's natural resources. At a government meeting in the early 1920s Lenin insisted that the government should base its nature conservation policies on sound scientific and technical principles.

As Weiner points out, Lenin not only approached his conservation policies from a purely theoretical basis, but often took time to listen to the concerns of people involved in the

protection of the natural environment.² His view on nature conservation was encapsulated in a law 'The Protection of Nature, Gardens and Parks'.

The first nature reserve in Russia was established in 1920. According to Weiner (1988) the Soviet Government was one of the forerunner countries to establish a protected territory exclusively in the interests of the scientific study of nature. In its efforts to conduct a coherent nature conservation policy the government was confronted with the criticism of the agricultural sector that was of the opinion that the government's policies did not address the country's need for basic food supplies. The farmers had scant understanding of or regard for scientific projects, desiring instead the promotion of subsistence production. They felt that less money should be spent on fancy scientific research and more on the development of basic agriculture.

Lenin's efforts to promote a healthy ecological environment in the USSR were reversed after Stalin came to power in 1927. Stalin was less interested in the ecological well-being of his country, because his major concern was to put Russia's economy on par with that of the West at whatever cost. In order to realise this ambition he steered the USSR towards developmental policies that saw the launch of huge industrial projects, such as those undertaken to improve the electrical capacity of the country or depleting the Sea of Azov of its salt reserve. Before the implementation of these projects no preliminary studies were done to determine the possible negative consequences of the industrialisation process for the environment. In his novel *The second day* (1932), the Soviet writer, Ilya Ehrenburg, depicts the harsh living conditions and the heroic efforts of the workers to overcome nature's resistance as they built a blast furnace. One of the protagonists, a writer, applauds this effort by describing it as a large structure that 'gives an impression of striking grandeur'. The furnace is a symbol of the 'greatness' of the Russian communist regime that wanted to prove its superiority over the Western world.

² The summary of Lenin's environmental policy. In: Weiner, D. 1988. *Models of nature: ecology, conservation and Cultural Revolution in the Soviet Union*. Pittsburg.

The Stalinist model of development, with its emphasis on rapid industrialisation, contributed dramatically to the environmental degradation and depletion of the natural resources of the vast territory of the country. Based on the fact that there was no accounting for environmental costs, the Soviet industrial model tended towards heavy industrial projects, with no concern for nature. Such schemes were also driven by the interests of the Party bureaucrats; the bigger the project, the greater its prestige. The regime furthermore suppressed ecological debate, and especially any criticism that mentioned a possible negative effect of its industrialisation projects on the well-being of nature. The role of the workers was to keep these enterprises going at any cost and not to comment on the impact of their work on the natural environment.

With 21st century hindsight, the Soviet policies as well as those of many countries towards nature, can be characterised as arrogant and aggressive, aiming exclusively to submit nature to the human will in order to implement these policies of the government. Little consideration was given to the long-term or short-term consequences of drastic steps such as the diversion of rivers in order to build huge dams or hydro-electrical power stations. From the 1930s, in line with government cultural policies, it became obligatory for writers to reflect the socialist realist dogma, which attributed superhuman qualities to the Soviet people, qualities which allowed them to surmount whatever adverse circumstances they might encounter in nature in pursuit of the industrial development of the country. The expression of personal views by writers with regard to nature conservation was not allowed unless they expressed the views of the Soviet Government. A rejection by a writer of this instruction would result in being ostracised or persecuted by the government. A subgenre of socialist literature emerged and became known as the industrial novel. In this type of literature industrial processes replaced people as the main protagonists of literary works. The interaction between people and their natural surrounding was reduced to an industrial setting and focused on the relationship between man and the machine; the proverbial boy loves tractor theme. Literature thus became an indispensable element in the large-scale national effort to transform the USSR into a

technologically advanced country on the same level as countries such as the USA. Needless to say, in this political context, a victory over nature was considered as the ultimate success of the Communist ideology.

Such ideas are reflected in Leonid Leonov's *Skutarevsky* (1930)³ a socio-political novel set in a remote northern province where a factory is being built in the forests. The main theme of the novel is the industrialisation of the countryside, through the building of factories. This results in a conflict between the Soviet leaders responsible for the construction of the factory and hermit monks who live in the forests. The outcome of the conflict is the victory of the constructors over the monks who finally agree to the building of the factory. The message of this novel is that due to their belief in the ideals of the communist regime, Soviet people have the power to convince even monks, who for centuries have upheld the old customs and religious beliefs that their industrialisation project is justified.

Similar ideas are tackled by Valentin Katayev's *Time forward* (1930)⁴ which portrays the attempts of Soviet workers to build a huge steel plant in the Magnitogorsk region in record time. The symbolism of this action is the 'speeding up of time' in the USSR to achieve a rapid industrialisation of the country. In his early works such as *Kara-Bugaz* (1932) and *Colchis* (1934) Paustovsky seems to embrace the spirit of the time.

Although the volume of literary criticism on Paustovsky's prose might appear to be quite considerable, it is important to note that in comparison to the existing criticism on his contemporaries who specialised in nature writing, this criticism is in fact scant.

In the 21st century only fleeting reference is made to his prose, and usually within the framework of textbooks on Soviet literature. Some critics on Paustovsky unwittingly

³ Leonov, L. 1936. *Skutarevsky*. Harcourt: Brace and Company.

⁴ Katayev, V. 1976. *Time forward*. Northwestern University Press, 1995.

refer to elements that are now considered to be important by ecocritics. However these aspects are analysed in a superficial way. Nevertheless, there are at least four such aspects that are noted in ecocriticism that coincide with the current ecological position.

Firstly, many of the critics of his prose such as Kuprianova⁵ and Poznyakova⁶ evoke the communist ideological connotations of his presentation of nature. Years later this idea is upheld by ecocritic Laurence Buell who contends that a writer's portrayal of his natural environment will inevitably be influenced by the political and ideological climate of his times.⁷

An analysis of the scholarship on Paustovsky shows that nearly all literary critics comment on the influence of the Soviet ideology on his prose, in particular as it manifested itself during the 1920s and the 1930s. According to most critics, the novelist's descriptions of nature are compliant with the principles of socialist realism. The protagonists of the novels, as a rule, reflect communist ideals; they are optimistic and active builders of the new Soviet state. More often than not, they are portrayed as triumphing over nature.

A scholar who applauds Paustovsky's contribution to a new socialist realist society is Heller.⁸ He contends that the spiritual transformation of Paustovsky's protagonists is closely linked to their efforts to dominate and finally conquer nature. In the 1930s Paustovsky carried out the obligatory visits to industrial construction sites as required by the government from the Soviet writers. Typical sites were those where hydro-electrical stations were constructed, and where nature was used to accelerate the industrial development. Heller is of the view that the relationship of Paustovsky's protagonists with

⁵ Kuprianova, N. 1982. Konstantin Paustovsky. The power of kindness. *Soviet Literature* 6: 89–92.

⁶ (Poznyakova), Познякова, Н. 1981. Особенности сюжета новелл К. Г. Паустовского. *Zeitschrift für Slawistik* 4: 489–495.

⁷ Buell, L. 2005. *The future of environmental ecocriticism*. Oxford.

⁸ Heller, L. 1985. Konstantin Paustovsky, écrivain modèle. *Cahiers du monde russe juillet–décembre*: 313–352.

nature clearly portrays the problems of economic reconstruction in the USSR in the 1930s. To Heller, Paustovsky's prose expresses the romanticism of people dreaming of a new future that will be brought about by their actions and their efforts to establish a modern society.

Kuprianova comments that Paustovsky's formative years as a writer were concurrent with the first years of Soviet power. She reasons that it was during this period that the novelist began to portray qualities that he found in Russian people, such as their inherent kindness. In her view these qualities are closely related to the Soviet moral stance. Kuprianova refers to Panova, a well-known Russian writer, who said the following about Paustovsky: "Readers love him because of his 'love of kindness and goodness'". She contends that the 'nobility' and the 'purity' of the author's characters give them the ability to transform the old world that existed before the revolution into a world where they can turn circumstances to their own advantage.

In order to substantiate this, Kuprianova cites Paustovsky, who said: 'My supreme devotion is to my country and the building of a new socialist society, this is what I serve and will always serve with my every word' and 'My personality was formed in the years of the Soviet power and that determined my subsequent life'. In this respect, Eterley calls Paustovsky's pathos is the way in which he expresses a person's revolutionary activity in subjugating nature to the will of people.⁹

Secondly, critics such as Poznyakova underpin that Paustovsky's writing was influenced by events in his life. In this category falls his autobiography, *Story of a life*.¹⁰

⁹ (Eterley) Этерлей, Е. 1982. К-90 летию К. Г. Паустовского. 'Золотой отблеск'. *Русская Речь* 5: 52-58.

¹⁰ (Paustovsky) Паустовский, К. 1982. *Собрание сочинений*, Т. 4, 5. Москва.

Konstantin Paustovsky (1882–1968) was a member of the intelligentsia. His father was a railway statistician with a keen interest in the arts and his mother belonged to a Polish intellectual family. The author pursued university studies that he had to abandon because of the First World War. While still in secondary school Paustovsky began his lifelong vocation; writing. Initially he wrote exotic poetry, but eventually realised that this was not his forte. As far back as 1912 he began to write short stories and novels – genres that he was never to abandon. He was also acclaimed for his erudite articles on nature and his sketches, in particular those depicting the connection between nature and the lives of writers and painters.

As indicated, a part of Paustovsky’s prose is autobiographical, in particular his short stories, which evoke events mentioned in his memoirs *Story of a life* (1961–1964) and in letters (1983),¹¹ for example to his friend Ruvim,¹² who accompanied him on many trips to the Meshchora region in Central Russia. Besides his short stories and novels, his essays in the collection *The golden rose* (1964) where he spelled out the ‘golden rules’ for the creation of a literary work, also contain autobiographical material.¹³

Thirdly, literary critics on Paustovsky, in particular, Borodin,¹⁴ and Poznyakova appreciate the author’s expressive imagery of nature. They also highlight the function of nature in Paustovsky’s prose, an aspect that, as explained by Glotfelty (1996), is one of the main research fields of a literary analysis of a literary work from the viewpoint of ecocriticism.

¹¹ (Paustovsky) Паустовский, К. 1983. *Собрание сочинений*, Т. 9. Москва.

¹² Fraerman, Ruvim Isaevich (1891–1972), a writer with whom Paustovsky’s friendship lasted for many years. His attachment to Ruvim is expressed in several letters. Fraerman was a well-known writer of children’s literature.

¹³ (Paustovsky) Паустовский, К. 1982. *Собрание сочинений*, Т. 3. Москва.

¹⁴ (Borodin) Бородин, И. 1971. К. вопросу об истоках поэтической образности лирической прозы. *Вопросы Русской Литературы* 1: 68–71.

Borodin admires the way in which Paustovsky uses metaphors. As an example, he mentions the way in which different types of rain are described through metaphors and epithets. Papov also highlights this aspect. He admires the way in which Paustovsky combines two or three epithets to portray nature, in particular the seasons of the year.¹⁵ Fraermal, a contemporary of Paustovsky, compares the words that Paustovsky uses to portray nature to ‘precious metals, each one having its own secretive spark and lustre’.¹⁶ He points out that Paustovsky believed that a writer never knew where he would find the precise word, and for this it was necessary to know the lexicon depicting nature of people from different regions. Poznyakova highlights Paustovsky’s associative imagery of nature of Russia. She mentions a visit by the writer to Rome, where the natural surroundings of the city spark a chain of images, all evoking scenes typical of the Russian landscape. It is also through this association of images that he expresses his longing for his motherland.

A well-known British scholar Henry notes that Paustovsky’s prose, in particular that written during the Cold War period, came as a surprise to readers in the British Isles.¹⁷ They were astonished to discover that it was not limited to the socialist realist principles of his times as his Russian commentators emphasised, and admired his description of the seasons of the year which carry a more universal appeal.

The function of nature in Paustovsky’s prose is underpinned by Poznyakova. She is one of the few critics who refer to this aspect in Paustovsky’s novels. She stresses that nature serves as a background to the actions of the protagonists in his prose. Furthermore, she contends that the writer conveys his personal thoughts through his depiction of nature. This study will demonstrate that it particularly applies to his portrayal of water and weather manifestations, through which he expresses his views on the creation of a literary work.

¹⁵ (Попов) Попов, К. 1989. Эпитет должен запомниться. *Русская Речь* 8:21–24.

¹⁶ (Fraermal) Фраермал, В. ‘Годы роста’ – Выказывание современников о Паустовском. <http://paustovskiy.niv.ru/paustovskiy/bio/sovremenniki.htm>.

¹⁷ (Henry), Генри, П. 1992. ‘Повесть о жизни’. *Журнал Литературное Обозрение* 3: 45–50.

Fourthly, another aspect portrayed by scholars of Paustovsky and which is also one of the pillars of ecocriticism, is the interconnectedness between a nation's culture and its natural environment.

The ecocritics Glotfelty and Ursula Heise¹⁸ both stress that ecocriticism investigates the relationship between the nature of a country and its culture. A few scholars writing on Paustovsky's prose mention this relationship, although they do not analyse it in depth. Borodin (1971) views Paustovsky's efforts to familiarise himself with the local language in Central Russia, and the connotations of the words, as a means of obtaining a deeper knowledge of the Russian culture. He also refers to the writer's intention of developing a dictionary of words depicting Russian nature and their cultural nuances. An important point is made by Chichibabin (1992) who observes that Paustovsky was of the opinion that the death of the Russian nature would result in the death of the Russian culture.¹⁹

It is worthy to note that a few scholars such as Otten (1982) mention the influence of Lermontov (1814–1841) on Paustovsky's descriptions of nature, and comment that the novelist considered himself a 'soul mate' of this romantic poet. Otten was impressed by the way in which Paustovsky, expressed his love for his motherland, in particular, her forests, lakes and meadows, similar to Lermontov.²⁰ Fraermal makes a similar point noting that Paustovsky's descriptions of nature are a key to understand the soul of the Russian nation and its culture. In line with this, he notes that the author was of the opinion that it was not only important to keep contact with ordinary Russian people, but also with their natural environments.

¹⁸ Heise, U. 1997. Science and ecocriticism. *The American Book Review* 18.5 (July–August).

¹⁹ (Chichibabin) Чичибабин, Б. 1992. Красота спасающая: [К 100-летию К. Паустовского]. *Литературное Обозрение*. 11–12: 42–50.

²⁰ (Otten) Оттен, Н. 1982. Издали и рядом. *Октябрь* 8: 128–168.

Paustovsky's close connection with the Russian nature is illustrated by his portrayal of forests, water and weather phenomena, seasons of the year and fauna and flora of the country. What many literary scholars fail to see in Paustovsky's portrayal of forests is that he not only describes the damage inflicted on forests by natural catastrophes or the actions of humans, but also puts forward concrete proposals on how to reverse this negative trend and remedy the problem via healthy ecological policies and practices. Furthermore, Paustovsky clarified the role that certain trees, for example the birch, play in Russian culture. He draws inspiration for his prose from Russian painters such as Nesterov (1862–1942) and Levitan (1860–1900), who portray the connection between the forests and Russian culture that served as inspiration for his own prose. For Paustovsky the Russian forests are a true sanctuary to which people can escape in order to find inner peace.

The author is also attracted to all the facets of the abundant water resources of Russia. His prose is characterised by an expressive portrayal of the lakes, rivers, rain and water-related phenomena, including natural elements such as lightning and the moon. Literary critics, for instance Levitsky, examining the role of water in his prose, comment on the involvement of his protagonists in industrial water projects, for example as portrayed in *Kara-Bugaz* (1932).²¹ In this novel the author depicts the heroic efforts of his protagonists doing exploration work with the aim to reclaim salt in the vicinity of a bay in the Caspian Sea, notorious for its high salt content. In his later works Paustovsky's water descriptions extend far beyond those of a socialist realist context. He uses the imagery of water to symbolically express the process through which a writer has to go before his work reaches fulfilment. He also employs water imagery to reflect the psychological state of mind of his protagonists.

²¹ (Levitsky) Левитский, Л. 1981. Примечание: In: Паустовский, К. *Собрание сочинений*, Т. 1. Москва.

It is important to note that Paustovsky's depiction of water is closely related to certain aspects of Russian culture. His depiction of the sea also falls in this category. A symbolic reading of his presentation of the sea will be attempted to show that he considers the sea as an epitome of the circle of life, in the sense that everything comes out the sea and returns to it. It is a place of birth and of transformations. As a body of water in movement the sea in the novelist's prose symbolises a transitional state between everyday reality and a situation of ambivalence pervaded by uncertainty, doubt and indecision.

The author's portrayal of the seasons of the year should be viewed within the traditional context of the succession of the seasons, which symbolise the cycle of birth, growth, maturity and finally decline; a process of a cyclic alternation and perpetual beginnings is involved. Furthermore, a pattern is evident in Paustovsky's presentation of the seasons. He often uses the seasons of the year as background for the actions of his protagonists. Autumn is his favourite season because he felt that his sensual experience of this season promoted his literary creativity. Similar to his water imagery, the seasons of the year reflect the state of inner tranquillity or turbulence in people. His depiction of the seasons of the year equally has an ecological dimension. He describes how abnormal manifestations, such as an unexpected drought in summer, can have a disruptive influence on the seasons to follow.

To the best of my knowledge, little attention is paid by the critics to the role that animals play in Paustovsky's prose. However, of particular note is his humoristic description of domestic animals such as cats and dogs. Besides the cultural values that Russians attach to certain animals, the author emphasises the close relationship between humans and animals. As it is evident in particular in his short stories, he considers animals to be the equal partners of people on the planet, although each has different roles. Paustovsky also emphasises the importance of the Russian flora for the culture of the country, as exemplified by the role of its herbs and flowers in certain cultural traditions.

In conclusion, it is noted that the ecocritical approach proposed as a research tool in this thesis will enable a corroboration of the study's hypothesis that Paustovsky's presentation of nature corresponds with universally accepted values such as the link between a nation's culture and natural surroundings. Although his work was created at a time when Soviet attitude was characterised by the drive to subjugate nature and its elements to the will of the Soviet regime, Paustovsky frequently departs decisively from this world view, investing his works with much greater scope and complexity. This is in particular the case with regard to his view on the ecological balance of nature.

CHAPTER ONE

ECOCRITICISM: AN OVERVIEW

As set out in the Introduction, the aim of this study is an attempt to submit Paustovsky's prose to an ecocritical analysis. It is asserted that such an analysis has a potential to show that his writing can be of interest to modern readers, and that its message still carries value in the 21st century.

Ecocriticism as a discipline began to flourish in the early 1990s. Its rapid development has been fostered by the various environmental crises that have occurred in recent decades in many parts of the world. This development coincided with the growing environmental awareness and prompted the emergence of a new philosophical paradigm which focuses on the close interaction between people and nature.

This study adopts the definition of ecocriticism which was formulated by Glotfelty:

Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and nature, which includes the interconnection between culture and the physical world, where culture acts upon and is affected by the environment.²²

An ecocritical examination forms the basis of this study, the aim of which is to examine the way in which Paustovsky portrays nature in his prose and contextualises the interaction between people and nature. The new dimension of this approach promises to extend to an innovative interpretation of his writing. In this chapter the following aspects of ecocriticism are discussed: its history; an overview of the work of the most important ecocritical scholars; the main components of ecocriticism; environmental psychology.

²² Glotfelty, C. 1996. Literary studies in an age of environmental crisis. In: *The ecocriticism reader*. Ed. Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. Athens, London.

It must be emphasised that this chapter does not purport to explore ecocriticism in all its disciplinary dimensions. It is rather intended as a theoretical and contextual foundation for a more exhaustive analysis of Paustovsky's prose in subsequent chapters.

One of the forerunners in developing the principles of ecocriticism is Lawrence Buell (1995).²³ He is of the opinion that it is not possible to analyse a literary work where nature plays a major role without understanding how history has impacted on the way people understand nature. Following his guidelines, both the collective and individual thinking on nature as manifested during past centuries is summarised here in respect of among others, ancient Greek philosophers; Judaism; Christianity; Islam; Buddhism; Hinduism; scholars of the Middle Ages; Animism; French philosophers of the 18th and 19th centuries and Darwin's evolution theory. This study also mentions the negative impact of ecological crises on nature in particular those caused by man and the measures that should be taken to surmount the damage caused by the crises. One has to bear in mind that many of these schools of thought, such as the various religions and animism, have existed concurrently. It is also important to note that the prevailing present day interpretation of the relationship of nature and humans draws on some of the postulates included in these viewpoints.

The most important scholarly treatises attributed to Ancient Greek philosophers and concerning the natural environment, are those of Plato (428–348 BC) and Aristotle (384–322 BC). They both wrote on nature's plenitude and the place of humans in nature's hierarchical system, and are widely considered representative of the thinking held in Antiquity.

Plato postulated a theory known as *The Platonic Cosmology*. This theory posits that the world of nature has its own soul and intellect, in a similar way to the human body. Each

²³ Buell, L. 1995. *The environmental imagination: Thoreau, nature writing and the formation of American culture*. Cambridge, London.

soul is free to communicate with other souls in the living cosmos. Thus Plato presents a philosophic antithesis of the anthropocentric idea that human beings are at the centre of the cosmos. This conception of Plato's, up to present remains one of the fundamental principles underpinning an ecocritical analysis of a literary work on nature (Branch,²⁴ Cohen,²⁵ Larson,²⁶).

Plato presents several ways in which humans should relate to nature. Firstly, in his *Laws* (360 BC) he describes a utopia, called *Magnesia*. People who live in this utopia have the duty to tend to the earth with the 'passion of a son for his mother'.²⁷ Secondly, Plato is of the opinion that humans should use their reason, rather than their senses, to relate to nature. Plato's thinking, inspired by his teacher Socrates (470–300 BC), that all the elements of nature are connected and that people must respect nature, reverberates in the works of ecocritics such as Glotfelty (1996), Branch (1994) and Larson (2007). However, most of them argue that the realities of nature cannot be perceived only through reason, and need to be perceived also through the senses. One should keep this point in mind later when analysing Paustovsky's works, more specifically his collection of essays *The golden rose*,²⁸ as a similar understanding of nature seems to inform his own sentiment.

Plato's views on the interconnection between people and nature were further developed by his student Aristotle. He created a comprehensive philosophy system on which later Western philosophy systems were established. His system encompassed morality, aesthetics, logic, science, politics and metaphysics. Aristotle was driven by a desire for knowledge and the resultant quest to understand nature in every possible realm. This is

²⁴ Branch, M. 1994. Ecocriticism: The nature of nature in literary theory and practice. *Weber Studies: An Interdisciplinary Humanities Journal* 11(1) 31–45.

²⁵ Cohen, M. 2004. Blues in the green: ecocriticism under critique. *Environmental History* 1: 9–36.

²⁶ Larson, S. 2007. 'To see things for the first time'. *Before and after ecocriticism*. Centre for Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies: Monash University.

²⁷ Taylor, E. 1993. *The shape of Athenian law*. Oxford.

²⁸ (Paustovsky) Паустовский, К. 1982. *Собрание сочинений*, Т. 3. Москва.

epitomised by his detailed observations of the natural world as contained in his work *Philosophy* (433 BC). Aristotle's philosophical and scientific interests are rooted in an unshakable confidence in the capacity of human reasoning. Aristotle, like Plato, believed in the integration of all the elements of nature. He maintained that the unity between humans and nature is undeniable. It can be asserted that the method of analysis proposed by Aristotle has since formed the basis of research in nearly all disciplines studying the manifestations of nature, including ecocriticism. In Aristotle's method, the posing of questions on natural phenomena is equal to affording it a *cause*.²⁹ The next step is to determine the source of any *change* in the natural environment, and the final step is to establish the *end*, that is, what the thing is.³⁰ For Aristotle souls are general modes of functioning. A plant will have a soul, because it feeds and reproduces. The souls of animals reside in their capacity to move and sense, and the souls of people in their faculty of thought.

An important world view that is of interest to ecocriticism and rooted in religion is Judaism. The way in which Judaism views man's responsibility towards the natural environment can be traced back to certain precepts given to the people in the Old Testament. One of these recommendations is not to destroy components of nature which might be beneficial to people, such as trees. The source of this prohibition is the Biblical command that soldiers at war are not permitted to cut down trees for wood in besieging the enemy. Trees on the land are not enemies against which a battle should be launched because they are valuable to people due to their fruit (Deuteronomy, 20: 19–20). Wartime is clearly a time of great need and often sadly results in the destruction of nature. These limitations imposed on the use of natural resources in a situation of war, indicate that ecological concerns are well rooted in the Jewish tradition.³¹

²⁹ *The Oxford companion to philosophy*. 2005. Ed. Ted Honderich. Oxford.

³⁰ Barnes, J. 1995. *The Cambridge companion to Aristotle*. London.

³¹ *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. 2007. USA.

Judaism prohibits direct as well as indirect acts of destruction, such as withholding water supplies necessary for the well-being of trees. In Biblical times cities were for example surrounded, by a *migrash*, an area of approximately 1000 square metres intended for practices of nature conservation and in which no action was allowed that would damage nature. The *migrash* was also dedicated to public enjoyment conducive to a peaceful relationship between people and nature. Another prohibition was the use of olive branches on the altar. This could be explained by the fact that the burning of olive wood causes a lot of smoke resulting in the pollution of the air. Judaism posits man as unequivocally superior to animals. This religion holds that the true meaning of the Biblical command that mankind must subjugate the world (Genesis 1: 28) does not mean that man must conquer the world by destroying its resources. On the contrary, the meaning is that man must find a way to take care of the earth.

Christianity took its basic philosophical tenets from Judaism. This is elucidated by White.³² He reasons that, although many world mythologies, including Ancient Greek, speak of the creation of the universe, it is only Judaism and Christianity that speak of a powerful God who created light and darkness, the heavenly bodies, the earth and all its plants, animals, birds and fish. After this, God created Adam, and, as an afterthought, Eve, to keep Adam from being lonely. Man named all the animals, thus establishing his dominance over them. Although the principles of Christianity hold that man has total control over the universe, it similar to Judaism, does not permit people to commit acts aimed at the destruction of nature.

In *The Oxford companion to philosophy* (2005) it is mentioned that in the Hebrew Bible the domination of humans over nature was moderated by injunctions towards kindness, for example, to rest one's oxen on the Sabbath. The Christian scriptures, however, are devoid of such injunctions. The apostle Paul even interprets the injunction about resting

³² White, L. 1996. The historical roots of our ecological crisis. In: *The ecocriticism reader*. Ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. Athens, London.

one's oxen as being intended to benefit humans (ibid. 2005). God is thus seen as a transcendental presence speaking only through man, who was made 'in the image of God'. Man is therefore a symbol of the orderliness and glory of God on earth (White 1996).

Although equally related to the understanding of nature by the Ancient Greeks, in some respects Christianity also differs significantly from the Ancient Greeks. Contrary to the Ancient Greeks who advocated integration between nature and people, Christianity views humans as superior to the other elements of nature. A reading of the theme of ecocriticism, as presented in Glotfelty (1996), shows that, although ecocritics differ in their approach to nature, they prefer a bio-centric attitude towards nature and reject an anthropocentric one. To this group belong scholars such as Fromm (1996), who contend that the human mind is so powerful that it can develop theories anchored in an anthropocentric view of life to the detriment of a complete integration of all the elements of nature. In this group are also Glotfelty (1996) and Cohen (2004). They agree that people have to tend to nature; however, they qualify this by pointing out that they must do so as equal partners with all the other elements of nature. The role of ecocriticism, therefore, is to determine to what extent literature with nature as subject reflects the role of humans with regard to nature, and whether they dominate nature, feel indifferent to it, or exploit it.

During the Middle Ages Thomas Aquinas (1225–1287), a Catholic priest of the Dominican Order, who was also a philosopher, exerted a profound influence on Christian theological thinking on nature. His ideas are increasingly studied by members of the wider philosophical community and his insights are employed in present day philosophical debates.

Aquinas wrote commentaries on several of Aristotle's books. This is indicative of the fact that he recognised the necessity of showing that Aristotle's system is approximate to

Christianity (*The Oxford companion to philosophy*, 2005). The most important principle of Aquinas's approach to nature is that God reveals Himself to individuals or groups of people through nature, and that to study nature equates to studying God. From the viewpoint of ecocriticism, Aquinas deviates to some degree from Christian principles, in particular with regard to the precept that man is placed on earth specifically to dominate nature. Although Aquinas does not place humans on the same level as the other elements of nature, he believes that humans must unite with the other elements of nature, even if it is through their intellect, in order to understand why the planet in its great diversity functions the way it does.

It should be noted that notwithstanding the differences between the fundamental beliefs of the Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism on the one hand and that of Judaism and Christianity on the other hand, there are also several similarities in particular with regard to their understanding of the relationship between people and nature.

Muslims believe that the world is God's gift to mankind and that there is irrefutable proof of His existence in every natural object. Every living creature, from the smallest of viruses to the largest of plants and animals, as well as the finest grain of sand, all reflect signs of God's creation and power. The purpose of creation as related in the Koran is an instrument to serve Allah, and is a means through which to get to know and worship Him. Allah created man from clay and then breathed His spirit into him. Similar to Judaism and Christianity Islam believes that the status of humankind is hierarchically higher than that of other living elements on earth such as plants and animals. The reason for this is that the number of attributes of God in humans is much greater than in other creatures. However, humans cannot assume ownership of the universe because it belongs to Allah. Humans are merely the 'caretakers' of the universe. Allah entrusted His creation to the hands of humans who have the obligation to protect and maintain it (Al-Quran 6: 165, 25: 39).

Buddhists have a somewhat different approach and different emphasis. They believe that perception and conception are the only two ways through which man can really experience the essence of the natural environment. Perception is the receiving of information through the senses. Conception is the analysis of received information and the formation of a coherent mental image. As will be demonstrated at a later stage, Paustovsky was probably aware of the philosophical underpinning of Buddhism, but he does not directly refer to it in his prose. It is interesting to note that like Buddhists, he is also of the opinion that people should first get to know nature through their senses and then analyse the information accordingly. The scholar Kuprianova, for example, emphasises that Paustovsky has always been attracted by the ordinary aspects of words such as the way in which they depict smell, sound and vision. This first sensory impression resulted in him discovering the ‘extraordinary’ qualities of words such as their different layers of meaning.³³

Consequently, the proponents of Buddhism also have strong views on the duty of humans towards nature. They reason that it is important to learn how to respect the inherent dignity and greatness of life, which is to be found in the beauty and majesty of its fauna and flora, but also in that of humans. Buddhists believe that there is a universal life force that connects all living beings. Contrary to what one may think, this does not mean that they believe that humans have to detach themselves from modern society and retreat into a forest or monastery. Similar to Buddhism, the scholar Dana Philips³⁴ highlights this aspect by indicating that it is only through experiencing all the elements of nature as they appear in reality that people can familiarise themselves with not only well conserved nature, but also with ecological crises. People are just part of the intricate web of being. All things are connected and humans cannot expect to stand outside the ecosystem.

³³ Kuprianova, N. 1982. Konstantin Paustovsky. The power of kindness. *Soviet Literature* 6: 89–90.

³⁴ Philips, D. 2003. *The truth of ecology, nature, culture and literature in America*. Oxford.

Buddhism teaches that the best way for humans to preserve nature is to adopt a positive attitude towards it. Such a state of mind is a prerequisite to developing the necessary qualities of courage, compassion and wisdom when dealing with nature. The rationale behind this is that when individuals succeed in transforming themselves on a profound psychological level they are capable not only of resolving their immediate problems, but they can solve also those of the global environment.

As with Buddhism, for Hinduism the concept of the environment is inherited from their ancestors over the course of time. Hinduism perceives God's presence through nature. The natural forces that govern the daily lives of people are considered to be manifestations of an almighty creator called the Brahman. In order to please the Brahman, believers feel that they have to live in harmony with His creation, which includes the earth, rivers, forests, the sun and seasons of the year. In a traditional Hindu family it is considered a sacrilegious act to insult or to abuse nature.³⁵ As will be demonstrated at later stage the theme of the harmony between people and nature is also central to Paustovsky's prose.

Animism is an understanding of nature that is still upheld today by some cultures. It has existed concurrently alongside the philosophy of the Greeks, the beliefs and dogma of Christianity and the reasoning of the Middle Ages. It refers to beliefs and systems that attribute souls or spirits to animals, plants, human beings and, in some cases, forces of nature, such as thunder, or natural entities for example mountains and rivers. This approach is known as Animism.

Animism does not classify the souls of humans, animals, plants, stones, water and the other elements of nature in terms of a specific hierarchy. Therefore the principles of Animism dictate that human souls do not, as Aristotle contended, have the greatest value

³⁵ Klostemaier, K. 1994. *A survey of Hinduism*. New York.

due to their capacity for reason. In many animistic world views, especially those of hunter-gatherer cultures, humans are regarded as being on a roughly equal footing with animals, plants and natural forces. Adherents to Animism believe that a true knowledge of man's nature and dignity can only be discovered through recognising the souls of the other entities in nature. Another important belief of animism is the conviction that souls exist within a body or an object and at the same time as independent, individual and separate spirits (White, 1996).

This brings us to the question of the relevance of animistic beliefs to modern ecocriticism. The significance is to be found in the high regard contemporary ecocritics have for some animistic concepts. Many ecocritics consider all elements of nature to have their own form of 'being', and to exist in a closely interconnected relationship with the other elements of nature. One could refer here to Manes who is one of those who maintain that is not only people, who are the main protagonists of a literary work, nature can sometime also be a protagonist. It has a 'voice' and communicates with people.³⁶

Equally important for modern thinking on nature are some of the views of the French philosopher, René Descartes (1596–1650). In the early 1630s Descartes wrote *Le Monde* (*The World* or *The Universe*) in which he reasons that matter is of essentially the same type throughout the universe. However, the mind for Descartes is a thing apart from the physical universe, a separate substance linking humans to the mind of God. He proposes a mechanistic conceptualisation of the universe, the aim of which is to show that the world can be mapped out with one's reason.

His *Meditations* (1641) carry some important thoughts with regard to the relationship between nature and humans, in particular the one between animals and humans, not all of which, however, are acceptable to the modern component of ecocriticism. Non-humans

³⁶ Manes, C. 1996. Nature and silence. In: *The Ecocriticism reader*. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. Athens, London.

are merely complex automata with no souls, minds or reason. They can hear see and touch, however, are unable to suffer. In his work *Discourse* (1634) the philosopher contends that the ability to reason and use language involves being able to respond in complex ways to all the events of life, something that animals cannot do. He contends that animal sounds do not constitute language, and are simply automatic responses to external stimuli. However, the thinking of most modern ecocritics such as White (1996), Branch (1994) and Manes (1996) contest his reasoning. According to them, his views are not acceptable to ecocriticism, because ecocritics believe that animals, in a way similar to humans can suffer and have some degree of intelligence. It is also a question of humans respecting animals. This will be illustrated by the analysis of Paustovsky's short stories where animals play an important role, for example 'The blue gelding' (1940).³⁷

Another well-known philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1812–1867), reflecting upon the environmental surroundings, expressed some opinions that appeal to modern thinking and coincide with modern ecocritical views. He wrote that notwithstanding the fact that animals do not have much intelligence, they are an integral part of the natural environment just as people are and not only 'automata' as stated by Descartes. Therefore, they ought to be bestowed certain rights and treated decently by people.

Charles Darwin, a contemporary of Rousseau's, has made an important contribution to this subject. Darwin's (1809–1882) research and finding represent a watershed with regard to the concept of the dominance of man over nature. Darwin was a naturalist, a geologist and an eminent collector of known and discoverer of new species. He provided a detailed and scientific corpus of evidence in his work, *The origin of species* (1859), to support his theory that all species of life have evolved over time from common ancestors through a process that he called natural selection. He proposed that natural selection,

³⁷ (Paustovsky). Паустовский, К. 1983. *Собрание сочинений*, Т. 6. Москва.

including that of the human species, is a result of competition among and within species in which the weaker individuals, and hence their traits, die out over time.

To establish whether Darwin's theory of evolution stands in contrast to the theory of creation, which constitutes the basis of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism is beyond the aim of this thesis. However, his theory is valid, because it is rather an indicator that people and nature have always been closely interlinked. Darwin's theory became unprecedentedly influential in research by biologists, philosophers, psychologists, anthropologists and their re-evaluating a relationship between humans and nature. They began to reflect on the physical and moral obligations of people towards nature and came to the conclusion that humans do not have the right to dominate nature, and that the interdependence between nature and humans is a given, since a change in nature affects people, and vice versa. It becomes obvious, thus, that this stance informs the basic ecocritical principles.

The modern conception of the ethical responsibility of humans towards nature has thus developed from religious, philosophical and scientific perceptions of nature. It has also developed from observations of reality itself, which have shown that, parallel to the progress made in terms of science, technology, industrialisation and urbanisation, the natural environment, on which mankind depends for his resources and his very existence, has been seriously damaged.³⁸ Ecocriticism was born out of this crisis. Ecologists and ecocritics realised that the challenges the crisis posed need to be given a serious consideration. Among all the areas that need be considered, literature was seen as a way to expose ecological crises and to find solutions to end these crises. According to Richard Kerridge, ecocriticism seeks to evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness as responses to the environmental crisis.³⁹ Cohen (2004) comments that an

³⁸ Sun, X. 2006. The ascendant green history study. *Ecocriticism* 3(1) 20–23.

³⁹ Kerridge, R., Sammels, N. 1998. *Writing the environment: ecocriticism and literature*. Ed. Richard Kerridge and Neil Sammels. New York.

ecocritical analysis of works on nature should take into account the ecological crisis that began to manifest itself as a serious concern from the beginning of the 20th century, and which is still present in the first decade of the 21st century.

In what is arguably one of the most significant ecocritic works to date, *The ecocriticism reader*, Glotfelty (1996) refers to Donald Worster⁴⁰ who contends that:

We are presently facing a global crisis, not because of our eco systems, but rather because of how our eco systems function. Getting through the crisis requires understanding our impact on nature as precisely as possible, but even more, it requires, understanding those ethical systems [i. e. those that do not function properly] and using that understanding to reform them.

The scholar Levin relates to this. Similar to Worster, he is of the opinion that ecocritic dialogue aims at nothing less than the transforming of the human environmental and ecological consciousness.⁴¹ This means guiding the historically egocentric Western imagination towards a newly emerging ecocentric paradigm with a deeper respect for the integrity of all forms of life. Writers are frequently the first to notice and expose environments at risk. Their special skill is to translate their vision and wisdom into human interaction as they explore the logical consequences of human ‘folly’.

Most ecocritics are of the opinion that it is important to pin down exactly what past ecological crises were, where they occurred and how they impact on the current situation. Dregson notes that there is almost universal agreement among scientists from most United Nations (UN) member states that the overall impact of environmental destruction caused by modern technology and magnified by human negligence is seriously disrupting

⁴⁰ Worster, D. 1993. *The wealth of nature: environmental history and the ecological imagination*. New York.

⁴¹ Levin, J. 1999. Letter. <http://www.asle.org/site/resources/ecocritical-librar>.

major ecological processes and functions.⁴² The build-up of greenhouse gasses and the depletion of the ozone layer affect the health of people and the fauna and flora of the planet. It does not appear that international agreements, such as UN declarations and treaties, have had much success in addressing these ecological crises.

As mentioned, ecocriticism was only recognised as a legitimate scientific discipline from the beginning of the 1990s. Taking into account that many literary critics are not familiar with this approach in the analysis of literature on nature, there is growing need to encourage scholars to apply it more vigorously in their research, in order to appreciate fully its benefits. There might still be a long way to go. For instance, before the 1990s the English literary fraternity was not responding in any significant way to the issue of the environmental crisis. A turnaround began in 1996 with the publication of *The ecocriticism reader*. Its main contributor, Cheryll Glotfelty, paves the way for the analysis of works on nature pointing out the benefit from an ecocritical viewpoint. She notes that most ecocritics share the fundamental premise that ecocriticism takes as its subject the interconnectedness between nature and culture. She emphasises that literary scholars who specialise in questions of value and meaning from the viewpoint of language, are already making a contribution to environmental thinking. In the view of another prominent ecocritic, Larson (2007), ecocriticism deals also with the way in which literature contributes to the articulation, interpretation and transformation of the boundary between nature and culture.

Another contemporary of Glotfelty's who has had a major impact on the analysis of nature from an ecocritical perspective is Ursula Heise.⁴³ Her writings on the interrelationship between the natural world and ecocriticism reverberate in the conception that ecocritics have of the discipline. Apart from maintaining that ecocriticism analyses

⁴² Dregson, A. 2001. Education for local and ecological responsibility: Arne Naess' Cross cultural eco-philosophy approach. *The Trumpeter* 1: 18–22.

⁴³ Heise, U. 1997. Science and ecocriticism. *The American Book Review* 18.5 (July–August).

the role that natural surroundings play in the imagination of a cultural community at a specific historical moment, she also is of the opinion that an ecocritical view of literature with nature as subject should never be presented in isolation. It should take into account the existence of an interdisciplinary bridge between science and literature, and between literature and culture.

According to the ecocritic Jelica Tošić, ecocriticism is the combination of two different and distinct disciplines; ecology and literary criticism.⁴⁴ Tošić proposes that the well-being and flourishing of non-human beings is a value in itself, independent of what uses humans might have for them. Humans do not have the right to destroy the richness of natural life on earth. On the contrary, they should protect it in whatever way possible. Therefore ecocritics examine the way in which literature with nature as its subject presents the obligations that people have with regard to preserving nature, and also with regard to restoring it in cases where it has been damaged.

Paustovsky thus fits into the category of those writers to whom the ecocritic Dell Panny⁴⁵ entrusts the role of changing negative attitudes towards nature conservation. She suggests that writers must describe the damage done to nature, and that they must also recommend ways in which the damage can be reversed. This role can be best fulfilled by writers who accept that everything in the world is interconnected. She defines ecocriticism as the relationship between literature and ecology, and shows how language and literature are vital aspects of a nation's cultural connection with the physical world. This viewpoint is supported by Sivaramakrishnan who writes that in 'the world we live in we need to re-orientate ourselves with regard to how culture reflects our values and ways of response to nature'.⁴⁶ Another important point is made by Scheese who is of the opinion that

⁴⁴ Tošić, J. 2006. Ecocriticism – interdisciplinary study of literature and environment. *Working and Living. Environmental Protection* 3(1): 43–50.

⁴⁵ Dell Panny, J. 1994. Ecocriticism: literature and ethics. <http://memo2day.tistory.com/1172632305>.

⁴⁶ Sivaramakrishnan, M. 2007. Green voices – some aspects of ecologic criticism. <http://www.Countercurrents.org/murali31087.htm>.

ecocriticism is most appropriately applied to a literary work in which the landscape itself is a main character, and when a significant interaction occurs between an author and his natural environment, such as its rocks, soil, trees, plants and animals.⁴⁷

It is beyond the scope of this study to give an exhaustive account of the contributions of all the major ecocritics to the development of the discipline, so only a few works of those who have had a major impact on establishing the main guiding principles of the discipline are discussed below.

One of the first scholars to lay down the foundations for ecocriticism as a formalised discipline was Kenneth Burke (1897–1993). His writings on ecology and how to write on nature date as far back as the 1930s. Burke was an avid and meticulous observer of nature and by analysing his observations of nature and putting them into writing, he offers ecocriticism a number of theoretical constructs.

Burke is well-known for the concept of ecological holism. He was one of the first 20th century scientists to realise the importance of an integrated approach to nature, insisting that every organism of nature is just as important as the other. In his view, the only way to maintain an ecological balance on earth is for humans not to interfere with nature in a way that could be detrimental to it. In his work, *Language as symbolic action* (1966), analysing the relationship between animals and people, Burke contends that although people and animals integrate in nature, they have problems in communicating.⁴⁸ He explains this by using the analogy of a trapped bird. The bird cannot use symbols to communicate with people and therefore will not be able to indicate that it wants to get out.

⁴⁷ Scheese, D. 1994. Some principles of ecocriticism. <http://www.asle.org/site/resources/ecocritical-librar>.

⁴⁸ Burke, K. 1966. *Language as symbolic action*. Berkly & Los Angeles.

Burke's ecological thinking was further developed in the 1970s by William Rueckert, who published *Literature on ecology. An experiment in ecocriticism* 1978.⁴⁹

Rueckert is concerned about the ecological crises on the planet, and directs his attention to human practices in relation to their effect on nature. He also contends that all the creative processes of the biosphere, including the human processes, may well come to an end if a way is not found to determine the limits of human destruction and intrusion that the biosphere can tolerate. He argues that a way must be found to learn how to creatively manage the biosphere. The relationship between humans and nature and how one through language and literature can make people aware of the ecological crises in the world, too did not escape Rueckert's attention. Although ecocriticism became an acknowledged discipline only in the 1990s, it benefited considerably from the prior research of scholars such as Burke and Rueckert.

Thus in 1995, these ideas were expanded by Buell's research which coincided with some of the most devastating natural disasters, such as earthquakes, tornados, floods and heat waves. This further emphasised the need to pay more attention to the natural environment. Buell's book entails much more than identifying ecological crises and the responsibility of people to try and reverse natural catastrophes. It also offers an engagement with the fast-growing subject of ecocriticism. For Buell the environment not only consists of the elements of nature. It also comprises cultural, ideological and political elements, because they influence the way in which people relate to their natural environment. He reasons that the physical reconstruction of the immediate surroundings of larger land areas is always inevitably selective and fragmentary. Buell strongly rejects the notion that the natural environment is subservient to human interests. He holds the opinion that it is a mistaken premise that humans can find total peace and rest in a 'pastoral' nature, without contributing to its wellbeing. The scholar highlights the

⁴⁹ Rueckert, W. 1996. *Literature on ecology. An experiment in ecocriticism*. In: *The ecocriticism reader*. Ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. Athens, London.

important role that scientific enquiry, as the one undertaken by ecologists and evolutionary biologists, plays in understanding human behaviour towards nature. Last but not the least, he points out that the historical interpretation of a literary work on nature is inseparable from its natural environment.

Glen Love, Professor of English at the University of Oregon, is another eminent scholar who, like Buell, played a pivotal role in defining the fundamental principles of ecocriticism. He made a significant contribution to the discipline allowing it to assume its rightful place among the related disciplines of environmental studies, biology and environmental psychology. Love rejects the view of those who see ecocriticism merely as ‘a bunch of cultural stories’. He demands treating the discipline as the one that promotes the understanding of how human nature relates to the natural environment.⁵⁰ This view is rooted in his premise that human behaviour is not merely an empty vessel into which the only input is that provided by culture. He believes that this behaviour is equally strongly influenced by genetic orientations that underlie and modify it or in turn is modified by cultural influences. Love advocates an ecocriticism that is based on ecologically orientated arguments that recognise the human connection with nature. He contends that literary studies have been diminished through their lack of recognition of the vital role that the biological foundation of human life plays in cultural imagination. He presents with clarity a model of how to incorporate Darwinian ideas, which form the basis for modern biology and ecology, into ecocritical thinking. One of the main aims of Love’s work is to show that an ecocritical analysis of a literary work on nature should take into account Darwin’s evolutionary principles.

The preceding overview of scholarly works that underpin the formulation of ecocriticism as a discipline might create the impression of a relatively broad-based consensus on central disciplinary principles, such as the rejection of an anthropocentric domination of

⁵⁰ Love, G. 2003. *Practical ecocriticism. Literature, biology and the environment*. Charlottesville.

nature, the importance of a synchronisation between humans and nature and the interconnectedness between human culture and nature. However, this is not entirely the case, and this apparent consensus is challenged by the theories put forward by Dana Philips (2003).

Phillips points out that, although ecocriticism has been eager to direct its gaze towards how nature is presented in literature, its practitioners have been too hasty in formulating their arguments, which are often divorced from reality. He justifies his reasoning by maintaining that ecocritics, often concentrate on imaginary settings that suggest vague personified entities. In his opinion they do not centre their ecocritical concepts on reality, for example, on what trees really are, but on illusory entities, such as the forests encountered in fairy tales.

Philips describes himself as an agnostic. He argues that ecocriticism must be cured of its fundamental fixation on literary presentation and shifts its focus towards the pragmatic. He further reasons that ecocritics have to accept that the imaginary status of elements of nature depicted in literature does not necessarily raise issues of belief. Philips further disagrees with the contention of Love and Buell that the mindset of people towards nature cannot easily be changed from an egoistic attitude to one of caring about nature.

Presented here is a general review of the works by some leading ecocritics that have focused on the discipline's basic principles. The conclusion that can be drawn from this review is thus obvious: although important insights into understanding the relationship of people with nature can be gained through ecocriticism, this discipline is still in its infancy, and new directions of thought on the analysis of literature on nature are certain to emerge in the future.

Thus far in this review scant attention has been paid to the way in which ecocritical theories impact on the analysis of literature on nature. It is important to note that

ecocriticism proposes several tools to analyse nature-orientated literary works; examination of the function of nature in a literary work, detecting the attitude of people towards nature, investigating the interconnectedness between the culture of a nation and its natural environment and the exposing of ecological wrongdoings as well as proposals of ways in which to correct this. Most ecocritics refer to these aspects in their analysis of prose where nature features.

According to the ecocritic Manes (1996), for example, the reading of a literary work of fiction often impresses on the reader that it is only the human protagonists in the work that are alive, while their natural surroundings are mute and passive. The implication of such an attitude is that nature is 'silent' and only takes on the value people accord to it. Manes insists that humans must learn to speak to nature. He suggests the necessity of establishing a language which will result in transcending the idea of humans as the 'unique speakers' in nature. This idea is shared by Rueckert (1996) who reasons that, as well as trying to identify with nature, humans must discover what the similarities between themselves and nature entail. This means much more than a casual connection between humans, animals and plants. It is therefore necessary to seek out the domains in which the natural elements and humans can co-exist, co-operate and flourish in the bio-sphere.

This implies that an ecocritical reading of literature calls for a paradigm shift from the human-centric to the bio-centric. Bio-centrism defends a more egalitarian status among living beings. Glotfelty (1996) contrasts the prefixes 'eco-' and 'enviro-'. According to her, 'enviro-' is anthropocentric and dualistic in its view that humans are surrounded by everything that is not us', namely the environment. 'Eco-', on the contrary, implies interdependent communities and integrated systems. This concept is expanded upon by Sun (2006) who explains that people are in fact just one of its elements and not the centre of nature, and that the ecological crises on earth are often directly provoked by people disregarding the rights of the other components of nature. This view has resulted in environmentalists and ecocritics developing a sub-discipline of ecology called ecological

ethics, which, amongst other things, discusses the rights of humans and the various elements of nature, the obligations of people towards nature, as well as the discussion of 'ecological holism'.

To put it in other words, human beings are no longer considered to be at the centre of value and meaning. This signifies that they should pay attention to the way in which nature has meaning for them, and to all the other aspects of the natural environment. The ideal for many is to return to a 'lost paradise', as described in Genesis, Chapter One. This kind of unity will only be regained through a re-thinking of the perception that anthropocentric society is complex while nature is dull and uninteresting. In conclusion, therefore, it can be said that it is a fundamental task of mankind to seek ways and means of improving its relationship with nature. This will entail the adoption of an increasingly non-reductive and more all-inclusive understanding of nature.

With regard to the relationship between nature and culture, Heise (1997) observes that literary critics are justifiably wary of drawing a precise boundary between 'nature' and 'culture', as though they mutually exclude each other. On the contrary, she suggests that upon close analysis nature and culture appear to be interconnected in multiple ways.

From the discipline of eco-ethics has developed the concept of eco-philosophy, also called ecosophy, which focuses on the ethical and philosophical implications of ecology. Ecosophy has an ecologically informed approach to nature and literature which also questions the hegemony of anthropocentric constructions of nature (Branch, 1994).

One of the overarching aims of cross-cultural ecosophy is to study literary works where nature plays a central role and thus to reach a long-term global view of specific ecological conditions at a specific time. This should then be followed by a prognosis of how to improve such a critical ecological situation by taking into account a nation's unique culture (Dregson, 2001). This implies that the solution adopted to solve a crisis

should run concurrently to a nation's cultural practices, and that drastic measures such as cutting trees to which a nation accords a specific cultural value should only be done as a last resort, when all other possible solutions have been exhausted. Ecosophy is thus based on an enquiry that respects both biological diversity and the rich store of value to be found within cultures and nature.

Several ecocritics emphasise the importance that location, in terms of the natural environment, plays in the analysis of literary works. Illustrative of this is the study by Lopez that shows that in recent years a kind of writing, called either 'nature' or 'landscape' writing, has begun to receive increasing attention from literary critics.⁵¹ The reason for this is that the impact that a specific location has on humans is a theme often present in literary works. Branch (1994), an ecocritic who focuses on the connections between a nation's natural environment and its culture, makes the point that ecocritics are interested in the way in which an author creates a sense of place in his works. Likewise, the main focus of much of the research by Larsen (2007) is on the role that a specific location in nature plays in a literary work. He points out that the Greek philosopher Aristotle considered the presence of place in a literary work to be of cardinal importance. To Larsen, place is not merely a landscape or site, since it is also a concept that embraces the basic principles of the order of nature, and which has a strong effect on all contexts in which a reference to nature applies, such as physics, psychology, literary works, poetry, metaphysics and logic.

Reiterating the view of many, the ecocritic, Tuür,⁵² argues that ecocritics are particularly interested in the relationships between people and their environment. Therefore, when the name of a place is mentioned in a literary work, ecocritics analyse to what degree the geography of a specific place influences the main protagonists. He even believes that a specific location contributes to the development of a writer's morality. A writer often

⁵¹ Lopez, B. 1991. A Literature of place. File: //E: \A Literature of Place.htm.

⁵² Tuür, K. 1996. *Of place and ecocriticism*. <http://encrypted.google.com/#q=Kadri+Tuur&hl=>

establishes a very close relationship with the place he describes in his works. The implication is that the place 'knows' that you are there. It 'feels' you and you will not be 'abandoned' (Lopez, 1991). With reference to the process of a writer establishing an intimate relationship with his natural surroundings, Lopez is of the opinion that this can only be done through becoming vulnerable to a place and opening-up to it. This requires that a person should experience a balance between himself and a specific location, and consider himself as one of the elements of nature, on an equal footing with its other elements. Attributing human qualities to nature is similar to the concept of 'personalisation' in poetics.

From the standpoint of ecocriticism, a writer rarely gives a totally objective description of a 'place' in a literary work. A writer's portrayal of nature is much more than a mere description of a setting. It is the expression of the person's bonding with, or alienation from a place. Branch (1994) points out that ecocritics are interested in the way in which a writer's experience of a place influences his work. This interest may be extended to the analysis of the different methods which a writer uses to acquaint himself with his natural surroundings.

Another important field of ecocriticism is the study of how literature on nature reflects the relationship between nature and the mind. This entails the correspondence between the inner self and the outer world. Ecocritics focus on two elements in this respect. Firstly, as Slovic (1996) puts it, it is necessary to take into account the principles of environmental psychology that are reflected in a literary work, and whether this inspires a nature-related consciousness in the writer. Secondly, ecocritics such as Lopez (1991) examine whether a writer portrays how the natural environment shapes the psyche of the characters in the work. This aspect will be shown to be of relevance to Paustovsky's prose.

Various ecocritics stress the importance of the relationship between the human mind and its natural environment, and propose that to write about nature is to write about how the mind sees nature and as well as how the mind sees itself. Slovic (1996) is of the opinion that many writers or ecocritics are not only analysts or appreciators of nature – rather they are students of the mind.

In a similar way to the ecologists of the 21st century, one may assume that Paustovsky was concerned about the ecological crises of his times, and in particular about the lack of responsibility that the Soviet authorities displayed in reversing these crises. This concern is seen in his essay 'For the Beauty of the Motherland' (1955).⁵³ In this essay he contends that a comprehensive understanding of the values attached to nature is important because this would help to remove the artificial boundaries between Russians and their natural environment. In his prose a conflict often takes place between protagonists who do nothing to stop the destruction of nature and those who are concerned and try to improve their natural environment.

This study contends that Paustovsky's presentation of nature, in particular its forests, water, seasons of the year, flora and fauna, familiarises the reader with the relationship between Russian culture and nature. Paustovsky deems the influence of nature on Russian painters to be of great importance, for example Levitan (1860–1900) and Nesterov (1862–1942), as well as the influence of nature on writers such as Turgenev (1818–1883) and Bunin (1870–1953).

As demonstrated, ecocritics value the role that a specific natural environment plays in a literary work. They study the way in which an author bonds with the place he or she is describing, or how he or she feels alienated from it. In Paustovsky's case, it can be said

⁵³ (Paustovsky) Паустовский, К. 1982. *Собрание сочинений*, Т. 7. Москва.

that he bonded with the whole territory of Russia, and in particular with the Meshchora region in the central part of Russia.

This does not mean that the author always concentrates on the positive qualities of this region, such as the beauty of its fauna and flora. He is equally drawn to its less attractive qualities, like the dark and impenetrable lakes in the Meshchora region. In his volume of essays, *The golden rose* (1964), the novelist contends that one of the most important ways in which a person becomes familiar with a location is through his or her senses.

One of the critical themes in Paustovsky's prose is the spiritual growth of its protagonists through their relationship with nature. It is often through a confrontation with nature that they succeeded in conquering their own shortcomings, such as a negligent attitude towards nature. The aspects which the author highlights in this respect, is extensively elaborated in Chapters Two to Five.

Firstly he notes how people perceive their natural environment, for example, whether they have an understanding of inherent cultural values and consider them to be worthy of respect. Secondly, he describes in detail how people relate to natural events and whether their relationship with nature serves as a motive to undertake actions aimed at nature conservation or to neglect it. Thirdly, he gives an indication of the effect a person's natural environment has on him, for example, whether it inspires confidence in him. He also shows elements in a person's character contribute to that person becoming engaged with nature and participating in its transformation and restoration.

CHAPTER TWO

FORESTS IN PAUSTOVSKY'S PROSE

We are creating a region of humid subtropics, worthy of the socialist era. Now keep in mind, comrades that nature cannot flourish without the constant and vigilant supervision by a clever man. Take care of the new nature, otherwise it will run wild.

– Paustovsky, *Colchis*.

One of the main features of Paustovsky's prose is his portrayal of forests. Only a few literary critics of his prose refer to this, and then only briefly. Borodin, for example, mentions Paustovsky's dedication to the conservation of Russia's forests.⁵⁴ An analysis of Paustovsky's prose from an ecocritical perspective, examining the values that he accords to nature, suggests that his portrayal of forests can be divided into three categories.

In the first category are Paustovsky's descriptions of nature that express his personal emotions and feelings towards his natural environment.⁵⁵ It can be assumed that the critical commentary on his portrayal of nature in general is also applicable to his depiction of forests. Kuprianova comments that Paustovsky has a special gift for seeing the beautiful, lyrical aspects of nature. Several critics mention the expressive metaphors that are characteristic of the novelist's work. For example, he compares the forests swayed by the winds, to ocean waves. Critics such as Borodin (1971) and Eterley⁵⁶ highlight Paustovsky's lifelong dream to compile a dictionary containing words of nature,

⁵⁴ (Borodin) Бородин, И. 1971. К вопросу об истоках поэтической образности лирической прозы. *Вопросы Русской литературы* 1: 68–71.

⁵⁵ Kuprianova, N. 1982. Konstantin Paustovsky. The power of kindness. *Soviet Literature* 6: 89–92.

⁵⁶ (Eterley) Этерлей, Е. 1982. К 90–летию К. Г. Паустовского. 'Золотой отблеск' *Русская речь* 5:52–58.

in particular the words that local people use to describe forests. However, this never materialised.

The second category constitutes his depiction of nature as guided by communist ideology and the socialist realist principles of writing. Leonid Heller contends that it is important to keep in mind that Paustovsky was influenced by the kind of revolutionary romanticism prevalent during the first part of the 20th century in Russia.⁵⁷ He upholds that this romanticism can, to a great extent, be considered as a constituent part of socialist realism because it represents the idealism of the post-revolutionary years and the unfolding of the dream of the new Soviet man in his pursuit to establish a natural environment suited to his own interests.

To the third category belong the works where the novelist portrays the link between the Russian forests and culture.

Paustovsky conveys the function of the forests on the planet in his novels, short stories and essays. In his essays he expresses what may be taken as his personal ideas on the conservation of forests. In his novels and short stories the topic of the protection of forests is conveyed by the protagonists, often a first person narrator. The reader sometimes gets the impression that the narrator speaks on behalf of the author himself, because the views he expresses in his fiction are confirmed in his non-fictional texts such as his correspondence.⁵⁸ This is confirmed by critics such as Davydova,⁵⁹ Vasilyev,⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Heller, L. 1985. Konstantin Paustovsky. Ecrivain modèle. *Cahiers du Monde russe* juillet-décembre: 313–352.

⁵⁸ (Paustovsky) Паустовский, К. 1983. *Собрание сочинений*, Т. 9. Москва.

⁵⁹ (Davydova) Давыдова, М. 1997. Перечитывая 'Повесть о жизни' К. Паустовского. *Библиотека* 6: 69–71.

⁶⁰ (Vasilyev) Васильев, В. 1984. Пейзаж с человеком на переднем плане. *Литературно-художественный и общественно-политический журнал "Наши современники"* 12: 150–167.

Poznyakova,⁶¹ and Otten⁶² who indicate that Paustovsky's fiction often refers to events from his personal life as contained in his autobiography, *Story of a life* (1961–1964).⁶³

Among the works that Paustovsky dedicated to nature, and especially to forests *Colchis* (1934) and *A tale of woods* (1948) need to be analysed with regard to his portrayal of forests from the perspective of the ethical responsibility of humans to preserve them. These novels stress the dreadful state of forests in Russia, caused by both natural catastrophes such as incessant rain and human actions that had been detrimental to them. They also highlight the negative consequences that damaged forests have on the daily life of humans, for example, the spreading of malaria (*Colchis*) and the production of polluted air (*A tale of woods*).

The words and the actions of the protagonists reveal the damage that has been done to the woodlands, and then proceed to specify the steps that are needed to remedy the situation. This is to be done by means such as the construction of canals to remove excess water in the soil, and the replacement of the 'dying' trees by different, more appropriate species (*Colchis*), or by the same type of trees as the 'ruined' ones (*A tale of woods*). It is postulated in this study that the way in which the ecological dilemma of damaged forests and the solutions to this problem are presented in these two novels is a precedent for and adds value to the current debates on the ethical responsibility of people towards nature.

During the last few decades of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century many ecologists examined ways to reverse the damage done to forests. The forests on the planet have not been able to carry out their cardinal function, which is to maintain the oxygen balance of the planet. The globe has been pushed almost to its environmental limits. Ecologists are currently trying to reverse this undesirable situation by looking for

⁶¹ (Poznyakova) Познякова, Н. 1981. Особенности сюжета новелл К. Паустовского. *Zeitschrift für Slawistik* 4: 489–495.

⁶² (Otten) Оттен, Н. 1982. Издали и рядом. *Октябрь* 8: 128–168.

⁶³ (Paustovsky) Паустовский, К. 1982. *Собрание сочинений*, Т. 4, 5. Москва.

ways to preserve the rain forests. The dates of publication of *Colchis* (1934) and *A tale of woods* (1948) are significant. It should be noted that by the time the second novel was published the author's view on the restoration of forests changed from one reflecting the Soviet ecological policies of his times to one that could be seen as a 21st century ecological viewpoint. The current system entails the need for countries to accept ownership of their national environment, in particular their forests. The modern perspective also prioritises the launching of a scientific study before any forest restoration is undertaken and the informing of ordinary citizens with regard to how healthy forests guarantee a balanced ecological system.

Ecocritics such as Dell Panny emphasise that an ecocritical analysis of literature on nature from the perspective of the interaction between nature and culture is just as important as its ethical dimension.⁶⁴ Writing on the cultural interdependence between humans and their surrounding natural environment Lopez, as cited in Phillips says:⁶⁵

I think of two landscapes – one outside the self, the other within. The external landscape is the one we see, not only its colours and shading at different times of the day, but also its plants, animals, its weather, its geology, the record of its climate. The second one is an interior one, a kind of projection within a person of a part of the external landscape. It responds to the character and subtlety of an external landscape.

Applying Lopez's words to Paustovsky's writing, especially the point about the external and internal landscapes, this study contends that no ecocritical analysis of literature with nature as a main theme can take place without considering the interdependence and interaction between humans and their close natural environment. It is therefore suggested that an ecocritical examination of the relationship between the forests and culture in Paustovsky's prose should be based on underlining the interconnectedness between the

⁶⁴ Dell Panny, J. 1994, Ecocriticism, literature and ethics. <http://memo2day.tistory.com/118263205>.

⁶⁵ Phillips, D. 2003. *The truth of ecology. Nature, culture and literature in America*. Oxford.

inner landscape of humans and their outer landscape. It is not a question of a casual interaction between these two components of nature, rather a genuine synergy. As the ecocritic Howarth writes; ‘although we cast nature and culture as opposites they mingle like water and soil in a flowing stream’.⁶⁶

A good illustration of the above ecocritical principle one finds in *Colchis*. It is through the depiction of forests and the intellectual and interpersonal conflicts of the main protagonists (a zoological student, a hunter, engineers, botanists, a party official and an artist) that the main topic of the novel is conveyed. The novel focuses on the transformation of a swampy jungle, the reason for diseases and lack of agricultural development, into a healthy and economically viable subtropical region. The inhabitants of Colchis plan to do this through the draining of the marshes, then the construction of canals and finally by replacing the current flora with different or supplementary types of tree species, such as lemon and eucalyptus trees. The debate on the transformation of the jungle develops into a conflict between the main protagonists of the novel.

Guliya is a hunter who is concerned that the transformation of the jungle will affect his hunting activities, hence his livelihood. The zoological student Vano opposes the removal of the jungle because this would result in the disappearance of an endangered species, the water rat, which lives in the swamps. Gabuniya, an engineer, feels sad about the destruction of the existing jungle, and yet he realises that the project is necessary to improve the living conditions of the inhabitants of Colchis, and to put an end to the malaria plague in the region. Another engineer, Pakhomov, considers the destruction of the forests as proof that the Soviet man can achieve anything he sets his mind on. The botanist Lapshin analyses the ecological situation in Colchis from the viewpoint of the old prerevolutionary intelligentsia. In his analysis of the natural environment of Colchis he uses the erudite style typical of the old school academics. His colleague, Nevskaya, is

⁶⁶ Howarth, W. 1996. Some principles of ecocriticism. In: *The ecocriticism reader*. Ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Howard Fromm. Athens, London.

a representative of the ‘new’ Soviet people, and in contrast, she embraces the idea that the adverse environment of Colchis can be changed into an environment better suitable to human habitation. Like Pakhomov, she maintains that the Soviet people will be able to overcome any adverse circumstance that might result from the ‘make-over’ of the ecology of the region. Kakhiani, an official of the Communist Party stresses that the inhabitants of Colchis can be proud to be worthy of the Party’s desire to transform the jungle for their benefit.

Lopez is representative of the ecocritical standpoint that for ecologically orientated imagery of nature to be credible the place or region to which it refers has to be identifiable.⁶⁷ In this respect, Berry notes that it is the complex knowledge of one’s ‘place’ and one’s faithfulness to the natural environment that prevents a person from exploiting or destroying nature.⁶⁸ Ecocritics also point out that specific characteristics of the natural environment might encourage people to bond with a place or to reject it. These views apply to *Colchis*. The conflicts between its protagonists have their origin mostly in their attitudes towards their marshy region, which some of them associate with suffering. Others adhere to the transformation of a tropical region, while the majority of them see the benefits of making it habitable. It should be noted that their differences are also inspired by their ideological standpoints, some protagonists supporting the communist ideology which called for the industrialisation of the country. People, like Lapshin, adhere to the thinking of the intelligensia before the 1917 revolution. At that time the ‘intolerant’ attitude of the autocratic tsarist government considered any form of ‘progressive’ thinking, that did not fit into the conservative policies of the government,⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Lopez, B. 1991. A Literature of place. File: //E: \A Literature of Place.htm.

⁶⁸ Berry, W. 1987. Getting along with nature. In: *Home Economics* 3: 6–20. New York.

⁶⁹ Dziewanowski, M. 1993. *A history of Soviet Russia*. New Jersey: 52.

Although the writer does not mention why he chose Colchis as setting for his novel, it is possible that he might have chosen this setting for its mythical value. Colchis is an ancient Georgian region. It was a kingdom state in Western Georgia (Caucasus region) which played an important role in the ethnic and cultural formation of the Georgian nation and its tribes. According to Greek mythology, the Golden Fleece was hidden in Colchis. The precious fleece grew on the back of a ram, which was constantly guarded by bulls. The gods promised the Greeks that if they would do the 'impossible' and bring the fleece to their country they would experience eternal wealth and prosperity.⁷⁰ The seizing of the fleece could be compared to finding the Holy Grail as described in the literature of the Middle Ages. The person who found the Grail with the blood of Christ in it would always be nourished by the spirit of life and would receive spiritual enlightenment (ibid: 952). The Golden Fleece was finally seized by Jason. The efforts of the inhabitants to replace their 'unhealthy' jungle by new trees in Paustovsky's novel can thus be compared to achieving the 'impossible', similar to the obtaining of the Golden Fleece.

To highlight the authenticity of the debate that develops on the pages of this novel, Paustovsky uses reported speech to explain the situation in Colchis. Pakhomov, an engineer and one of the main characters of the novel introduces Nevskaya, a botanist and newcomer to the region. Thus he tells Nevskaya how the sea gradually withdrew, uncovering the territory which became known as Colchis. After the climate changed for the worse and the swampy jungle was plagued by continuous rainfall. The trees of the forests stood knee-deep in water and their roots barely held out in the heavy clay. There were no grasses and only a few small animals.

Vano is a zoological student who is undertaking experiments to try and save the endangered species of the water rat, and would therefore do anything possible to prevent the habitat of this animal being destroyed. In spite of his dedication to his experiments, he

⁷⁰ *Dictionnaire des symboles*. 1982. Ed. Jean Chevalier, Alain Gheerbrant. Paris.

has an aversion to the jungle. Paustovsky uses two descriptive epithets to communicate the feelings of discomfort and ambiguity that the fate of Colchis awakens in Vano. The first epithet 'душный' (1981, 1: 500), meaning 'sweltering' or 'stuffy', relates to the physical distress that one experiences during a hot, humid day, when breathing becomes difficult. This sensation affecting Vano is reinforced by the epithet 'непроходимый', which refers to the 'impenetrability' of the forests. Although Vano's interests in preserving the swamp are different to those of Guliya's, he finds sympathy with Guliya in the end, who himself warms to the idea of the need for change.

Guliya (the hunter) fears that he will lose his hunting territory which is in the process of being transformed into a subtropical region. Although this threatens his hunting activities, his views undergo a gradual change, to such an extent that he begins to have negative feelings towards the jungle. The change in Guliya's feelings is represented through the imagery of the forests. In the past he had considered the forests a profitable hunting ground; he now sees them as threatening and not conducive to his wellbeing.

Леса молчали. Гулии казалось, что деревья с тревогой оглядываются и смотрят ему в спину. ... дождь летел, как всегда, со стороны моря ... Начинался приступ малярии. (1981, 1: 522)

The forests kept silent. It seemed to Guliya that the trees looked around with uneasiness and watched his back ... the rain as always came from the direction of the sea ... An attack of malaria set in.

This fragment conveys the increasing feeling of personal malaise that the hunter associates with the jungle. The personification of the forests, which 'kept silent' and 'watched his back', expresses a view shared by ecocritics, such as Manes, that nature is

‘articulate’.⁷¹ Through the device of personification the forests become intelligent subjects able to express their ‘feelings’. Guliya’s remorse is aggravated by the guilt that he is tolerating the ruination of the forests. However, this sentiment is finally overruled by his misery, caused by the endless rain and the onset of a malaria attack.

Guliya comes to the realisation that he and his relatives have suffered ill health from the negative effects of the Colchis jungle. Most of his family members have died of malaria. He does not wish such a fate for himself and comes to believe that the creation of a better future for the inhabitants of Colchis entails the replacement of the current jungle with trees foreign to the region. The engineer, Pakhomov, explains to him that the planting of eucalyptus or lemon and orange trees, usually found in subtropical regions, is part and parcel of the transformation of the marshy tropical nature of Colchis into a subtropical region.

On one occasion Guliya kills a rare animal and is found guilty by the local court. However, the young engineer Gabuniya saves him from going to prison, realising that he would be a big asset to the excavators because of his excellent knowledge of the Colchis forests. Vano gradually learns to respect Guliya’s expertise and realises that, notwithstanding their previous differences, they are both interested in establishing a natural environment in Colchis that would be conducive to the well-being of the local population.

Two other protagonists of *Colchis*, the engineer, Gabuniya, and his older, more experienced colleague, Pakhomov, are tasked by the Communist Party to construct canals that will drain the excess water in the region and finally bring about the transformation of the jungle into useful and habitable land. Both of these engineers are devoted to their work, yet they justify their actions in different ways. Gabuniya feels ambivalent about the

⁷¹ Manes, C. 1996. Nature and silence. In: *The ecocriticism reader*. Ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. Athens, London.

destruction of the existing jungle. Although it might be indicative of human resistance to change, like Vano he too feels sorry about destroying century-old trees as well as the few remaining animals.

Дни, месяцы и годы леса шумели и качались волнами тусклого серебра, и Габуния прекрасно понимал досаду Вано. Иногда ему было жаль этих лесов. (1981, 1: 506)

For days, months and years one could hear the murmur of the forests that swayed with waves of dim silver, and Gabuniya perfectly well understood the annoyance of Vano. He sometimes felt sorry for these forests.

By comparing the swaying of the forests that are about to disappear to the waves of the ocean Gabuniya conveys the inner life of the forests. Nevertheless, he also realises that there is no other choice, because the deplorable living conditions of the inhabitants of Colchis have to be improved. He has to continue with the draining of the marshes. The image of waves of 'dim silver' refers to the silver undersides of the forest's leaves that become visible in the wind. The epithet 'dim' evokes the loss of the forest's lustre, radiance and value due to the excavating activities. The colour silver is also the colour of distinction and age. In this case it could imply the regret that the planners of the Colchis project do not appreciate the mature age of the woods.

Gabuniya is one of the few protagonists in the novel who, apart from supporting the conservation policies of the communist government, accommodates the feelings that other people experience towards the transformation of the natural environment in the region. For instance, he understands why Vano was initially in conflict with everyone. He comprehends that the water rat would become extinct, as well as that the excavation and the construction of canals would systematically ruin Guliya's hunting territory.

Pakhomov, Gabuniya's, comrade occupies a somewhat different position. He is the mouthpiece for the Party's communist ideology. He feels no regret at all that the jungle is in the process of being removed. He considers the destruction of the forests as proof that the Soviet man can achieve anything he sets his mind to. However, explaining to a newly-arrived botanist what the project of the removing of the jungle entails, he relies not on the ideological justification, but on scientific justification.

Из-за болот здесь страшная бедность растительных видов. [...]

Почему такая растительная бедность? Вы ботаник, вы лучше меня знаете, что для роста дерева нужно не меньше метра сухой земли. А где его взять, этот метр, когда вся страна заболочена? Вот и растет всякая болотная дичь. (1981, 1: 525)

Due to the swamps, there is a terrible poverty of types of vegetation [...]

Why such a poverty of vegetation? You are a botanist, you know better than me that for the growth of trees, not less than one metre of dry soil is needed. But where to get this metre from, when the whole country is marshy? Any swampy rubbish grows here.

Pakhomov's discontent with what he considers the poor vegetation of Colchis is for him yet another reason for draining the swamp. One wonders what modern ecologists would say about this issue, and whether they would be in a position to offer a better solution. Nevertheless, in accordance with the Soviet policy, the decision was justified.

Although Gabuniya and Pakhomov's are both members of the Communist Party, they differ in their thinking. Gabuniya is conscious of the downside of the project. He is worried that the ruthless planners have no consideration for the current vegetation and will stop at nothing in their pursuit to destroy it. However, he knows that he has to implement the Party's policies. Pakhomov, on the contrary, has no regret with regard to the fate of the forests in the region. He displays an anthropocentric attitude towards

nature in that he believes that humans should have total control over it. Pakhomov is a true Soviet man, who desires a victory over nature. These two different views emphasise the complexity of the ecological problems that the novel poses.

The dilemma that the Colchis jungle presents is not limited to the positions of the engineers Gabuniya and Pakhomov, but is extended by the opinions of two other specialists, the botanists Lapshin and Nevskaya. Although both of them try to improve the ecology in Colchis, their viewpoints are not consistent with what is considered today as modern ecocritical thinking.

From the beginning of the novel, Lapshin, a representative of the old intelligentsia in Russia and a recent arrival in Colchis, makes it quite clear that the swampy environment in the region is unpleasant to him.

Лапшин ушел [из духана]...

Весь окружающий мир был ему неприятен. Ему не нравилась эта плоская болотистая страна с пышным названием, не нравились затяжные теплые дожди, мутные реки, мчавшиеся в море со скоростью курьерских поездов. (1981, 1: 504)

Lapshin left [the inn]

The whole surrounding world was unpleasant to him. He did not like this flat, swampy country with its pretentious name. He did not like the continuous warm rain, the turbid rivers, flowing into the sea with the speed of express trains.

Lapshin's negative attitude towards Colchis is reflected in his scientific articles in which he recommends the types of the trees which should be planted in Colchis to replace the existing woodlands. Nevskaya describes these articles as 'mediocre', 'verbose', 'boring' and 'uninspiring' (1981, 1: 504). The style of his articles does not show any enthusiasm

for the ecological improvement that the project might bring about in the region. She considers his views anachronistic and not in line with the progressive and revolutionary attitudes of the time. It seems that emphasising the style of Lapshin's writing, Nevskaya ignores the merit of his articles. Instead she proposes a simplified writing style that should reflect the communist ideology with regard to the transformation of nature, such as the subjugation of nature to the interests of the government. It is through the portrayal of the old and the new ideologies, respectively represented by Lapshin and Nevskaya, that the environmental debate between the two is conveyed.

It is significant that Lapshin's writing reflected the style of the former intelligentsia of Russia and was spurned by the Soviet regime because it represented everything what it sought to destroy. The Soviets took particular exception to what they considered the 'haughty' attitude of the intelligentsia who deemed themselves more educated than those who became the new leaders. Although Soviet scientists were often not as well informed as the former intelligentsia, they possessed great boldness and self assurance, which made them believe that they could change society. During the years after the 1917 revolution the Soviets expected the 'new' Soviet man or woman to use their energies to adapt nature to suit the interest of the new system. They also expected this attitude of the new Soviet people to be reflected in prose writing, which Paustovsky seems to embrace at this stage.

As mentioned, the central theme of *Colchis* is the conflicting interests of nature and people. This confrontation is explored not so much on scientific level as it is on ideological level. Gabuniya develops this theme further. He has a more balanced view than Nevskaya's ideas with regard to the subjugation of nature. It should be remembered that, Gabuniya has a tolerant attitude towards people who do not support the policies of the Soviet government concerning the natural environment. He, nevertheless, considers it as his duty in his capacity as a party member to indicate to Lapshin the approach of Lenin towards nature. Lenin believed that there was some fantasy in the most elementary phenomena of nature and that one only had to consider the beauty of musical instruments

made from the bark of the bamboo tree to find evidence of this. Thus the engineer believes that the planting of 'healthy' woodlands in Colchis should be supported. The reason why Gabuniya told Lapshin about the changes is to encourage him to be more positive with the regard to the environment changes launched by the Party in the region. The botanists Lapshin and Nevskaya are in agreement that the marshy woodlands in the tropical Colchis should be replaced by trees such as orange or eucalyptus that are typical of a subtropical region, however, they approach their work in different ways. Lapshin has an indifferent attitude towards the natural environment of Colchis and does not really want to become involved in concrete actions to bring about a change in Colchis. He limits himself to pondering the topic from the theoretical perspective that is why he thinks that the writing of an erudite article on this issue with botanist jargon will suffice.

Unlike Lapshin and in a way similar to Pakhomov, Nevskaya displays the attitude that was expected of a true communist. In a straightforward, uncomplicated way, she informs the citizens of Colchis about the advantages of establishing a new 'improved' natural environment. She approaches her botanical work with enthusiasm which is typical of the 'new' Soviet people believing in their power to change the swampy, tropical jungle of Colchis into a propitious subtropical region. She is working at a botanical station in Colchis doing research on a project that is investigating the supplementing or replacing of the Colchis forests with eucalyptus trees, indigenous to Australia, as well as with lemon trees. Her choice of eucalyptus is based on the repellent smell of this tree. She therefore thinks of it as a 'tree of life'. Nevskaya also considers the eucalyptus as the most valuable of the tropical trees, and believes that it is not without good reason that it was called the diamond of forests. She knows that one five-year old eucalyptus tree gives more timber than two-hundred-year-old silver firs do. To Nevskaya this seems improbable, yet she knows that it is true. Also, each eucalyptus tree requires lot of water which indeed makes it an ideal choice if one wants to dry the marshes.

Nevskaya is portrayed as a 'positive' protagonist because she does everything expected from the new Soviet citizen. Lapshin, however, is represented as the villain. He is a typical example of an old generation academic, who is not open to the ideological change in Russia after the Revolution. It can be assumed that in his early years of writing Paustovsky shared this passion of the new Soviet men and women to change the world. In the first part of his autobiography, *Story of a life*, he expresses his enthusiasm for the social changes that came about after the Revolution, writing that these changes shaped his personality and positively influenced his writing.⁷²

Considering the attitude of Nevskaya, modern ecologists are bound to ask whether the planting of trees that are not indigenous to the Caucasus region can be justified, even though it has the potential to stimulate economic prosperity and conquer malaria. They might argue that it is important to conserve the existing natural environment, and to harmonise the needs of the population with it. They believe that it is important to maintain the integrity of the indigenous vegetation of a region rather than opt for dramatic changes because this contributes to the regulating of ecological cycles such as those of water, carbon and nitrogen in the atmosphere. Undisturbed, these cycles remain relatively stable.⁷³ In addition to this, modern ecologists emphasise that the indigenous trees of a country serve as an environmental buffer for the region where they grow. They protect other plants, trees and micro-organisms from extinction in that area, as well as ultimately their disappearance from the face of the earth.⁷⁴ However, in the case of Colchis this would mean that people will continue to suffer from malaria and that the region would not be viable from an agricultural viewpoint.

Recent ecological writing is also of the opinion that introducing drastic changes to the environment of a region must be founded on what is executable, and not on what is

⁷² (Paustovsky) Паустовский, К. 1982. *Собрание сочинений*, Т. 4, 5. Москва.

⁷³ Option G – Ecology and Conservation. 2008. From *KstructIB*.

⁷⁴ Methods of conservation of forests. 2010. @*TutorVisa.com*.

excessively optimistic. Many of man's schemes to transform nature are impossible to execute. Nevskaya's and Pakhomov's reasoning can be attributed to the idealistic desire of the inhabitants of Colchis to establish their own 'paradise on earth'. It should however not be overlooked that the attitude of the inhabitants of Colchis is inherently selfish. Firstly, they are only concerned with how the removal of the jungle trees will improve their lives. They have no thought for the possible consequences this might have on the ecology of neighbouring regions. Secondly, although the inhabitants of Colchis do not envisage any 'gigantic' industrialisation project to transform their natural environment as was the rule in the 1930s in the Soviet Union they still have no respect for the existing jungle, and want to transform it at all costs to promote their own wellbeing.

Besides the arguments of the main protagonists of *Colchis* on the vision of the future namely Colchis as a 'paradise' that will change the lives of its inhabitants, this theme is also communicated through the minor characters in the novel. Paustovsky, for example, refers to an oil painting hanging on a wall of the local inn painted by a local artist, Becho. Here he paints Colchis as 'the Garden of Eden' with an abundance of lemon trees in blossom set in green meadows. It epitomises the striving of the Colchis people to improve their lives in a marshy, mosquito-ridden jungle and to replace it with a 'heaven on earth'. Becho's portrayal of Colchis could be interpreted as a metaphor for the entire Soviet Union of the early 1930s, as it is a telling example of the romantic tendency in Russian Soviet art, that is, to portray the natural environment in an idealised way. This romanticism derives from the official Soviet dogma of the 1930s that promoted the inherent desire and determination of the new man to subjugate his immediate surroundings to suit his own needs, always subservient to those of the Soviet state.

Similar to Pakhomov and Nevskaya, the communist party official Kakhiani wants to transform Colchis into a utopia where humans will triumph in their attempt to submit nature to their own will. He is very proud that the inhabitants of Colchis have succeeded, like 'good' Soviet citizens, to implement the instructions of the Party. Their cleverness is

what is expected from people educated by the Soviet government. Kakhiani points out that there are many examples where the natural environment was converted from an unsuitable environment that detrimentally affected the wellbeing of the people to an environment that allowed them to be healthier and to function to their optimum. He is also of the opinion that Soviet men and women can even transform nature in Siberia, which is covered by snow for the most part of the year, into a subtropical region. This claim of Kakhiani's demonstrates his disregard for the needs of the environment and his short-sightedness.

Although one might understand the desire of the inhabitants of Colchis to improve their quality of life, Kakhiani's statement demonstrates that it was in fact arrogance that led to the ecological malpractice of replacing the indigenous vegetation of the region with non-indigenous vegetation. They transformed the region on the basis of their belief that the Soviet people can succeed in any difficult task they undertake. As mentioned in the introduction, the Soviet regime saw the power of people over nature as a manifestation of progress. No stumbling block could be allowed to stand in their way in transforming nature to suit their own needs. Any victory over the elements of nature was seen as testimony to the superiority of the Soviet ideology.

Concluding the analysis of Colchis, one can say that it is the availability of the findings of ecocriticism that opens today another perspective on Paustovsky's writing. Having summarised the novel in such detail, one can see how past attitudes have contributed to the ecological crisis today. According to Glotfelty⁷⁵ one of the important principles to which ecocriticism adheres is the synergy between humans and their natural environment. Synergy implies that humans cannot dominate nature, and vice versa, and that both have equal rights. Therefore a narrow anthropocentric view of nature must surely be avoided, because it might, and most likely will, result in serious errors of judgement that are

⁷⁵ Glotfelty, C. 1996. Introduction: Literary studies in an age of environmental crisis. In: *The ecocriticism reader*. Ed. Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. Athens, London.

neither to the advantage of humans nor their natural environment. It is evident that the inhabitants of Colchis are not in synergy with nature, and have a supercilious attitude towards their surrounding woodlands. They are of the opinion that humans are powerful enough to dominate nature, and do not question whether this new 'paradise' would in the long-term be beneficial.

As already pointed out in the Introduction during the Soviet era enormous technological endeavours were undertaken and many investments were made striving to prove that the Soviet people could subjugate nature. Notwithstanding these projects, Lenin was determined to protect the Russian forests.⁷⁶ Under Stalin, however, the Soviet policies on forests changed dramatically. This was in part because of his love of gigantic projects and his callous indifference to the human cost of achieving his objectives. The program of industrialisation was launched by Stalin under the slogan; 'Catching up with and overtaking the West' (Dziewanowski: 189). With the focus on the industrial development of the country after the destruction caused by the ravages of the revolution and the civil war, the preservation of forests became of secondary importance. Thus it can be assumed on the basis of *Colchis* that Paustovsky in his early years of writing projected the nature conservation policies of the Soviet Union. The novel was written during a period when Soviet ideology aimed at subjecting nature to man's will. In this respect the Soviet ideology was dualistic. On the one hand, when a gigantic human project was launched, everything was subject to 'the higher cause', including the people. The government, under the leadership of the Communist Party, did not hesitate to remove people from the region. On the other hand, the government wished to give the impression of trying to accommodate the wishes of its citizens, while in fact looking after the interests of their ambitious project. In the case of Colchis it was economic issues that won the day, namely the expected profit that would be obtained through the selling of the timber.

⁷⁶ Weiner, D. 1988. *Models of nature: ecology conservation and Cultural Revolution*. Pittsburg.

A tale of woods,⁷⁷ written by Paustovsky fourteen years after *Colchis*, also has as its main theme the improvement of the forestry environment. Nevertheless, the problem of the destruction of forests in this novel is now approached in a different way than it was in *Colchis*. The main theme of *A tale of woods* is not the replacement of the existing forests with new, non-indigenous trees. Instead it is the launching of efforts to restore the original forests that were destroyed by people during in the 19th century, as well as during the Second World War. Similar to the protagonists in *Colchis*, the protagonists in *A tale of woods* have different opinions with regard to how to go about solving the forestry problems.

It is evident that at the time of writing *A Tale of Woods* Paustovsky increasingly became disillusioned with the failure of the Russian authorities to undertake nature conservation. In his article, 'For the beauty of the motherland' (1955),⁷⁸ published a few years after *A tale of woods* he expresses his own ecological convictions with regard to the conservation of forests. Paustovsky now openly criticises the indifferent attitude of the Soviet Government which had resulted in the mistreatment of the forests of the country. He condemns the fact that the authorities planted trees at random, for example, too close to the shores of rivers, which in the event of flooding would result in the destruction of the trees. According to him, the government set a bad example with regard to the protection of forests, and this resulted in Russian people taking their forests for granted, neglecting it and in some cases, ravaging them. He argues that it is not possible to fight for the restoration of the forests in Russia if ordinary Russians do not understand the role that forests play in maintaining the ecological balance on earth. It is important to note that the article was written in 1955 two years after Stalin's death, a period during which writers could more openly criticize the policies of the government.

⁷⁷ (Paustovsky) Паустовский, К. 1982. *Собрание сочинений*, Т. 3. Москва.

⁷⁸ (Paustovsky) Паустовский, К. 1983. *Собрание сочинений*, Т. 7. Москва.

A tale of woods opens with events taking place in the middle of the 19th century in the forests of Rudoy Yar, in Central Russia. The famous Russian composer, Tchaikovsky, temporarily lives in these woodlands that serve as inspiration for a musical composition he is working on. His peace is soon disturbed by a merchant who hires labourers to chop down the forests in Rudoy Yar in order to enrich himself with the profits from the selling of the timber. The composer undertakes several efforts to save the forests. He even tries to buy them, however, he does not succeed. Tchaikovsky's motivation for trying to save the forests is that they have served as an important inspiration for some of his symphonic compositions. He appreciates their 'lyrical' quality.

Besides portraying the pre-revolution destruction of forests by individuals, the collective destruction of the Russian forests by the German soldiers during the Second World War is deplored. Kolya, a forestry student, travelling from Leningrad to his hometown during the first spring after the war blockade was lifted, observes that the burnt forests stretch to the very edges of the land. What remains of the trunks of the trees looks like black poles. The wind blows the ashes of the trees about, covering the landscape with blue-grey fumes.

A tale of woods condemns the inconsiderate attitude of people towards nature and emphasises the sad result of this for life on earth. Ways are proposed to rehabilitate the forests. This subject is extensively discussed by some of the main characters in the novel, a writer Leontev, a forest worker Baulin, and an expert on forests Professor Piotr Maksimovich Bagaley

According to Levitsky, the character of Leontev is based on the well-known Russian writer, Sokolov Mikitov (1892–1975), a scientist who was passionate about the state of

woodlands.⁷⁹ Leontev has some suggestions with regard to how the process of the restoration of the forests should be undertaken. He is not in favour of forests being planted in strict ranks, and compares such a procedure to the discipline and rules as required in the military, where individualism is disallowed. He proposes that people should not interfere in the natural growth process of forests, and that it must be allowed to take its own course. His view does not reflect any scientific theory. It is based on his own vision of bringing about the wellbeing of the Russian forests.

Being a forest worker Baulin refutes Leontev's viewpoint that forests should be allowed to follow their own course of growth. He argues that many scientists have the same opinion as Leontev but have been proved wrong by forestry experts. Baulin contends that forests grow quicker when they are planted systematically, because this allows the experts to better control their growth.

It is through the voice of Piotr Maksimovich Bagaley, a professor at the University of Leningrad, that the author traces a middle-ground between the reasoning of Leontev and that of Baulin. Bagaley points out that what is more important than discussing the way in which trees should be planted is finding ways to increase the rhythm of their growth. He also feels that it is important that people understand why it is in their interest to protect their forests rather than destroy them.

According to Bagaley, it is necessary to explain to students how the forests and parks influence the air in towns and produce healing oxygen to counteract the carbon-dioxide that industrialisation and machinery produce. The forests decrease the force of winds, absorb dust and gasses, decrease the radiance and heat of the sun, thereby providing a better environment for relaxation. Trees give the eyes reason to rejoice and generally improve the quality of life. Bagaley furthermore explains that for this reason the Soviet

⁷⁹ (Levitsky), Левитский Л. 1981. Примечание. In: Константин Паустовский. *Собрание сочинений*, Т. 1. Москва.

Government is currently working on the cultivation of forests that grow quickly, and on improving the quality of Russia's indigenous trees such as pines, aspens and poplars. The professor's position is thus in line with modern day principles of ecocriticism. He clearly draws a link between the wellbeing of nature and the wellbeing of people. His argument in favour of forests is philosophical, and yet it also has a background.

A tale of woods underscores an important ecological principle. It explains how a change in one of the cycles of the year will disturb the following cycles. Although he is a writer, Leontev temporarily serves as a forest warden in order to improve his understanding of nature, hoping that this will enhance his nature writing. He attends a course on how to deal with forest fires. He learns that the devastating smoke of a forest fire, most often caused by humans, could create an imbalance in nature's cycles:

Дым от лесных пожаров резко уменьшает солнечный свет и задерживает вызревание хлебов. В 1915 году, когда в сибирской тайге был большой пожар, из-за сильного дыма хлеба созрели на месяц позже обычного срока. (1967, 3: 88)

The smoke from forest fires strongly diminishes the sunlight and delays the ripening of corn. In 1915 when there was a big fire in the Siberian Taiga, because of the smoke the corn ripened about one month later.

An ecocritical analysis of the woodlands imagery in Paustovsky's prose should go beyond the ethical perspective. It should also focus on the way in which forests are connected to the Russian culture. Ecocritics, such as Glotfelty (1996), emphasise that everything in the world is interconnected, and that therefore an ecocritical analysis of literature on nature has to also focus on the relationship between nature and culture. This is underpinned by a study written by Howarth (1996), who is of the opinion that ecocriticism observes how human values shape form and meaning in nature.

Rueckert (1996) contends that the language of a literary work is worthy of analysis because it reflects the creative mental energy which gave rise to such a work.⁸⁰ Therefore, this thesis proposes that it is purposeful and profitable to examine the close interaction between the imagery of forests and culture in Paustovsky's prose from a lexical perspective. The author himself indicates that his close relation with the forests in the Meshchora region awakened anew his interest in forest-related words and terminology (1982, 3).

To Paustovsky, the creation of a nature-related vocabulary is dependent on a writer's personal association with the surrounding forests. He describes the way in which his own intimate relationship with the woodlands in Central Russia expanded his sense of touch, sight and smell, which in turn brought him to understand the real meaning of words depicting forests, and added further value to his prose.

Должно быть, у каждого человека случается свое счастливое время открытий. Случилось и у меня одно такое лето открытий в лесистой и луговой стороне Средней России [...]

В это лето я узнал наново – на ощупь, на вкус, на запах – много слов, бывших до той поры хотя и известными мне, но далекими и непережитыми. Раньше они вызывали только один обычный скудный образ. А вот теперь оказалось, что в каждом таком слове заложена бездна живых образов. (1982, 3: 231)

It is necessary that each person experiences a happy time of discoveries. I experienced one such a summer of discovery in the forests and meadows of Central Russia [...]

During this summer I rediscovered – by touch, taste, smells – many words that existed before this time, and although known to me, were remote and not experienced. In the past

⁸⁰ Rueckert, W. 1996. Literature and ecology. An experiment in ecocriticism. In: *The ecocriticism reader*. Ed. Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. Athens, London.

they only evoked an ordinary, barren image. But now it seemed as if in each such a word there were really many underlying living images.

This excerpt from Paustovsky's collection of essays *The golden rose* corresponds with the ecocritical thinking of Lopez (as cited by Philips, 2003) that the outer landscape of a person influences his inner landscape. In an account of his personal attachment to the Meshchora region, Paustovsky depicts the impact that the 'backwoods' (1982, 3: 244) had on his discovery of new meanings of words depicting the concepts of touch, smell and visual sense.

Paustovsky's prose works are characterised by different writing styles. In his short stories and novels the topics are conveyed through the characters' words or actions, through which they present their own interpretations. In his essays such as those contained in *The golden rose*. Paustovsky assumes the role of the narrator and performs a directing function by expressing his own opinions and those of fellow Russians with regard to the state of Russian forests. During the first summer that he spent in the Meshchora region he was reacquainted with the language of this region, and with the natural phenomena typical of Central Russia. He explains how one word describing forests, namely 'backwoods', had a profound influence on his writing and enriched the forest imagery in his works.

Первое лесное слово, какое меня совершенно заворожило, было – 'глухомань' [...] я впервые услышал его [...] от лесников. С тех пор оно связано в моем представлении с дремучим, замшелым лесом, сырыми чащами, заваленными буреломом, с йодистым запахом прели [...], с зеленоватым сумраком и тишиной. (1982, 3: 244)

The first forest word that completely charmed me was 'backwoods' [...] For the first time I heard it [...] from the forests guards. Since then, my imagination would associate it with

a thick, moss-covered forest, with damp thickets, heaped up with wind-fallen trees, with the iodic smell of rotten stumps [...] with a greenish twilight and silence.

Besides demonstrating how the woodlands of the Meshchora region enriched his use of the Russian language, the author also considers how the woodlands have been a major inspiration to Russian composers, painters and writers. Paustovsky uses the example of Tchaikovsky, and a pianist, Sviatoslav Richter, to illustrate the influence of woodlands on their music. In *A tale of woods* one may find a number of quotations where this is stated in respect of Tchaikovsky:

Он никогда не ждал вдохновения. Он работал, работал, как поденщик, как вол, и вдохновение рождалось в работе ... больше всего ему помогали леса [...]

[...] Он без остатка отдал свое сердце России – ее лесам и деревушкам, околицам, тропинкам и песням. Но с каждым днем его все больше мучает невозможность выразить всю поэзию своей страны [...]

Он знал, что сегодня, побывав там, он вернется – и давно живущая ... тема о лирической силе этой лесной стороны перельется через край и хлынет потоками звуков. (1982, 3: 7-8)

He never waited for inspiration. He worked, worked, like a day-labourer, like a bullock, his inspiration thrived while he was working ... most of all, the forests helped him [...]

Without keeping anything back he gave his heart to Russia, to its forests, its hamlets, village fences, paths and songs. But with each day the impossibility of expressing all the poetry of his country tormented him [...]

He knew that today after he has been there [Rudoy Yar] he will go back – and the long living ...theme on the lyrical force of this forest land will flow across the country and will surge with flows of sounds.

The quoted passages show that Tchaikovsky was deeply influenced by Russian nature and strove to convey the essence of the Russian forests. These excerpts also serve as illustration of a vital link between the forests and Russian culture; as they are shown as an inspiration of art.

A similar link of nature to the nation's culture features in the short story 'A log hut in the forest' (1960) where the author describes the close relationship of the pianist Sviatoslav Richter with the Russian forests. A first person narrator, one can assume that it is the author, tells a story of a boat trip on the Oka River. During this trip he meets an old buoy-keeper, Shashkin, who shows him a wooden house in the forests on the shores of the Oka River where Richter used to play his piano during the summer holidays. In these woodlands the pianist was able to give free rein to his performance. Shashkin tells the narrator that, through listening to Richter, he was able to understand the way in which music can make a person aware of 'godliness', of something that transcend the everyday existence of people. Shashkin's story is as follows:

Так вот слушайте, как я до понимания музыки дошел. Просто, скажу, по счастливому случаю [...] Ночь была июньская, как сейчас, [...] Он был густой..., можно сказать, лес – весь стоит в темноте, в росе, в тишине [...] и вдруг [...] будто меня обожгло: из леса, из той темноты и тишины зазвенели будто сотни колокольчиков. Таким, знаете, легким переливом, а потом рассыпались по лесу, будто голубиная стая по грозовой туче. И запел лес [...]. (1983, 6: 556)

Listen how I reached the understanding of music. Just, I will say through a happy event [...] It was a night in June as now [...] it was dense, the forest ... everything stands in darkness, dew and silence... And suddenly I felt as if something burned me: from the forest, from this darkness and silence rang as if a hundred small bells. With such a light modulation and spread out over the forests like a flock of doves along a storm cloud. And the forests began to sing [...]

The role of the Russian forests in Paustovsky's prose is not limited to inspiring musicians. It also provided an inspiration to painters such as Isaac Levitan (1860–1942) and Mikhail Nesterov (1862–1942). In the short story 'Cordon 237' (1948), a writer reviving his relationship with the Russian forests, comes to realize how the forests of the region inspired some of their greatest paintings.

Мы привыкли говорить 'левитановские места' и 'нестеровская Россия'. Эти художники помогли нам увидеть свою страну с необыкновенной лирической силой. Нет ничего плохого в том, что к зрелищу этих речушек и ольшаников, бледного неба и лесных косоогоров всегда примешивается капля грусти [...]. (1983, б: 412)

We are used to say 'places of Levitan' and 'Nesterov type of Russia'. These artists helped us to see their country with its unusual lyrical force. There is nothing bad in that there is always a drop of sadness added to the sight of these little rivers and alder thickets, pale sky and forest slopes [...]

Although Nesterov is not well-known outside Russia, Paustovsky's reference to his paintings is significant to Russians. Nesterov's portrayal of forests is intimately related to the sacred and the spiritual. He often uses woodlands and birch tree groves as the background for meetings between Russian saints and ordinary people. His paintings depict the forest trees as fragile, with each stalk and each twig of the trees moving in the slight breeze. Commenting on the impact that the forests had on Nesterov's art, Paustovsky points out that the artist's depiction of the forests is so vivid that when he himself visits the low forests in the Meshchora region he recognises scenes reflected in Nesterov's paintings. To Levitan Paustovsky attributes the presentation of all the diversity of Russian nature.

'Aquarelle colours' (1936) is yet another tale in which nature is closely associated with artistic endeavour. It describes how a Russian painter called Berg, who lived in France for many years, finally returns to Russia and comes to the sad realisation that the nature of his motherland, in particular, her woodlands, means nothing to him. When he remembers the small town where he grew up, situated on the banks of the Dnepr River, the forests on the outskirts of the town it evokes a feeling of emptiness in him. In short, he feels alienated from the natural environment of his youth. A friend of his, who is also a painter, invites him to visit a town situated in the Muromsk forests. Although initially Berg does not want to go, in the end, he accepts the invitation. As he enters the town he sees the light shining on the birch trees in such a way that they seem to him to be golden (1983, 6: 170).

During his walks in the forests Berg becomes aware of the murmuring sounds of the forests, mingled with the chirping of the birds. For the first time in many years he is emotionally touched to his inner core by the Russian nature. After some time he reaches out for his paint brushes and begins to paint the woodlands. Something that was dead in him is reawakened, his deep attraction to and love for the nature, in particular its forests, is thus restored. He now paints his first landscapes that capture nature's rich essence and the magical connection between Russians and their motherland.

The reference to the birch is significant. The birch tree plays a practical, spiritual and symbolic role in the culture of the Russian people.⁸¹ Due to their slender stems, birch trees are associated with the beauty of young women. They are also associated with growth and fertility. This tree is used extensively in folk arts and crafts. According to an ancient tradition, the Russian people in spring drink the juice of the birch tree as a rejuvenating tonic. During the celebration of the Holy Trinity which falls in May the Russian Orthodox Churches are often decorated with birch tree twigs.

⁸¹ Ivanits, L. 1989. *Russian folk belief*. New York: M.E. Sharpe Inc.

To summarise, an ecocritical analysis of Paustovsky's works that deals with the relationship between people and nature, specifically the forests as in *Colchis*, for example, shows that in the 1930s his prose was to a large extent inspired by the principles of socialist realism that required writers to portray the dreams of the 'new' Soviet people. They were expected to succeed in everything they undertook, including the transformation of the jungle. A reading of *Colchis* demonstrates that in the 1930s Paustovsky subscribed to the communist drive to subjugate the environment to the needs of a developing communist state. However, as seen in *A tale of woods* the writer has undergone a considerable modification in his approach. This novel goes beyond a theoretical discussion of the issue of the conservation of forests. Concrete proposals are interwoven in its plot with regard to how the rehabilitation of the forests must be undertaken, as well as a justified motivation for each proposal. *A tale of woods* reflects ideas that modern ecocritics would embrace, namely that people seldom consider the negative consequences that their behaviour has on the natural environment, and neglect the value of its forestry treasure, both in terms of what is necessary for the growth of the plants and the health of humans.

It can be concluded that the ecological principles embedded in Paustovsky's prose are relevant to ecology scholars pondering the issues of ecology in the 21st century. On the ethical level he stresses that humans should direct their thoughts to a full understanding of their responsibility towards woodlands. Paustovsky's prose highlights that not only are forests one of the most influential factors in maintaining a healthy natural environment, they are also an important component of the cultural life of Russians. They have through the centuries inspired creativity in literature, music and painting.

CHAPTER THREE

WATER AND WEATHER PHENOMENA IN PAUSTOVSKY'S PROSE

One of the main characteristics of Paustovsky's prose is its vivid and symbolic depiction of water. He presents water in its rich multiplicity: water in a downward movement, such as drizzling rain, heavy showers and storms, or water in a horizontal form, as in rivers, lakes and ponds. On the one hand, the author's symbolism of water depicts human emotions in a manner universally present in many well-known works of literature, for example, *The old man and the sea* (1952) by Ernest Hemingway, where the turbulence of the sea symbolises the frustration of an ageing Cuban fisherman struggling to catch a giant marlin. On the other hand, the author's water imagery is determined by the specific context of his novels or short stories. Also of worthy note is the novelist's references to the moon, stars and lightning, which are closely linked to weather phenomena.

As with Paustovsky's portrayal of forests, his depiction of water warrants an analysis from several ecocritical perspectives. In this study the manifestations of water and weather phenomena in his prose are analysed in accordance with ecocritical viewpoints, which also form the structure of the chapter: the importance of the place where a work of literature was created, the correlation between water and the Russian culture, the connection between the mindset of people and their water and weather surroundings. These principles do not appear separately from one another, but add fullness to Paustovsky's portrayal of the close bond that humans have with nature. It is assumed that not only the literary works of Paustovsky, but also those of Russian writers who are well known for their portrayal of nature, such as Turgenev (1818–1883), Grin (1880–1932), Bunin (1870–1953), Prishvin (1873–1954) and others, would benefit from a similar analysis.

Only a few literary critics refer to the role of water in Paustovsky's prose. They usually mention his water imagery within the framework of the author's romantic portrayal of the sea and rivers. Chistyakova remarks that in the beginning Paustovsky, in his description of oceans, focused on their restful blue colours, and did not depict their stormy elements.⁸² As does Chistyakova, Kuprianova too highlights the author's exotic and romantic description of the sea. She cites the Russian writer Yuri Bondarev (1924–), who said that he could close his eyes and 'through Paustovsky's descriptions visualise the tranquillity of the sea at dawn and the sun baked pebbles'. Bondarev's words aptly sum up Paustovsky's skill in capturing nature.⁸³

In a similar vein, Poznyakova admits that she is impressed by Paustovsky's thorough knowledge of the sea and sailing, which he obtained through conversations with sailors when he worked as a journalist at a newspaper specialising in articles on the marine environment.⁸⁴ This aspect is also emphasised by Eterley, who comments that Paustovsky's contact with old, experienced sailors improved his knowledge of the true character of the sea.⁸⁵ Chistyakova stresses that Paustovsky's portrayal of rivers is masterful. She illustrates her argument referring to his description of the Neva River in whose dark waters the mist is 'melting'. In another example, she notes that, through his portrayal of rain, the author creates the 'ambiance' for a novel or a short story where the monotonous sound of the rain on a roof during autumn days reflects the gloomy, desperate sentiments of his protagonists. Scott, who translated a few of Paustovsky's short stories, considers 'A rainy dawn' (1945) to be one of the best stories ever written by Paustovsky, because the natural environment such as the rain reflects the comfort that the

⁸² (Chistyakova) Чистякова, И. 1986. Пейзажная живопись К. Паустовского. *Русская Речь* 5: 81–86.

⁸³ Kuprianova, N. 1982. Konstantin Paustovsky. The power of kindness. *Soviet Literature* 6: 89–92.

⁸⁴ (Poznyakova) Познякова, Н. 1981. Особенности сюжета новелл К. Г. Паустовского. *Zeitschrift für Slawistik* 4: 489–495.

⁸⁵ (Eterley), Етерлей, Е. 1990. К 90–и летию К. Г. Паустовского 'Золотой отблеск'. *Русская Речь* 5: 52–58.

protagonists feel in each other's company.⁸⁶ According to Davydova, this short story reminds her of Aleksander Blok's poetry where the meeting with an unknown, dream-like woman always takes place during a hazy, rainy night.⁸⁷

In ecocriticism the significance of place is not limited to being a setting for a literary work on nature since it is seen also to be an expression of the connection or separation of humans from their natural environment. The first aspect addressed in this study is Paustovsky's attraction to the central and northern regions of Russia, in particular their lakes. The ecocritic Branch, for instance, emphasises that it is a question of how an author creates the sense and spirit of a place⁸⁸ Lopez argues that an in-depth understanding of the geography of a place is of major importance, because the way in which a writer 'imagines' a place is influenced by its geography.⁸⁹ This view is reflected in Paustovsky's biographical writings in which he explains how as a child he had a passion for geography; it was his favourite subject at school, partly because it provided objective, factual information that exotic, far-off countries indeed existed. He is of the opinion that a map conveying the geography of a region is an indication of the interaction between the different elements of that region, for example between its forests and water. He also points out that when one finally visits a place it often has nothing in common with what one originally envisaged. It may exceed one's expectations, and at other times it may result in disillusionment.⁹⁰

Paustovsky's description of lakes, as for example in *The Meshchora region* (1939)⁹¹ his volume of short stories (1912–1964)⁹² and *The golden rose* (1964), is highly dependent

⁸⁶ Goldman, N. 2005. Interview with Marc Scott translator of 'White rainbows' and other romantic tales. In: *Knowledge Base*. <http://www.bookpleasures.com/Lore2/idx/o/1592/ar>.

(Davydova) Давыдова, М. 1997. Постигни красоту и совершенство мира: Перечитывая Повесть о жизни К. Паустовского. *Библиотека* 6: 69–71.

⁸⁸ Branch, M. 1994. Ecocriticism. The nature of nature in literary theory and practice. *Weber Studies: An Interdisciplinary Humanities Journal* 11(1) 41–55.

⁸⁹ Lopez, B. 1991. A literature of place. File: E: \A literature of Place. htm *The enviroLink network*.

⁹⁰ (Paustovsky) Паустовский, К. 1982. *Собрание сочинений*, Т. 3. Москва.

⁹¹ (Paustovsky) Паустовский, К. 1982. *Собрание сочинений*, Т. 6. Москва.

on the physical place where his short stories, novels and essays originated. He portrays the lakes in the Meshchora territory in central Russia, and those in the northern part of Russia, as part and parcel of the natural environment much in the same way as people, animals and plants belong to it. An analysis of Paustovsky's imagery of lakes from an ecocritical perspective highlights the interconnectedness between Russians and their natural environment, in particular their attachment to a specific place and the way in which it reflects the Russian culture.

The writer experienced a relationship with the Meshchora region in central Russia which, according to him, had a very productive and beneficial influence on his writing. On several occasions he confessed that when visiting this region he often had the feeling that he had seen its forests and lakes somewhere in a dream. His close connection with this region became overwhelmingly precious to him. He fell under the spell of central Russia that stirred feelings that prevailed for the rest of his life and made him feel a Russian to the core of his being. In this respect Kuprianova (1982) quotes Paustovsky, who admits:

Nobody is closer to me than our ordinary Russian people, and I know nothing more beautiful than our Russian land. I shall never give up Central Russia for the most famed beauty spots of the world I have found complete and simple happiness in our Meshchora region. It was the happiness of one's unity with one's country, of creative thought and inner freedom of contemplation and fruitful work. It is to that part of Russia, to her alone, that I owe the greatest number of books I have written.

Notwithstanding his appreciation of the beauty of the Meschora region, Paustovsky's personal relationship with its picturesque lakes filled him with both awe and apprehension. He describes these lakes as transparent and reflecting the rays of the sun on their surfaces.

⁹² (Paustovsky) Паустовский, К. 1983. *Собрание сочинений*, Т. 6. Москва.

An image frequently present in his depiction of water, and which is associated with both the positive and the negative feelings of people, is that of a lake resembling a mirror. In the *Meshchora region*, which contains autobiographical material on the author's relationship with the region he compares the shining, unmoving surface of several of its lakes to a mirror. In literature in general the smooth surface of a lake often symbolises tranquillity. One of the reasons for this is that bodies of still water offered the first mirror to people in the form of their own reflection and that of the sky above. Although the author does not directly refer to the ancient myth of Narcissus, this lake imagery evokes the myth of Narcissus contemplating the 'mirror' of the lake and admiring himself. Unlike Narcissus, though, who only saw his outer, superficial image, looking at the reflection of his own image on the surface of a lake, Paustovsky admits to experiencing a deep, inner revelation of the 'darkness' of his own soul. This is one of the few instances in his autobiographical prose that the author acknowledges his vulnerability.

For example, when describing the sombre lakes in central Russia, he confesses that they evoke a feeling of mystery in him and a premonition of death, as if the lakes were numb and life had for ever left them (1982, 3: 603–605). During an encounter with the Poganoë Lake he vividly describes the foreboding atmosphere that surrounds it:

Озеро было таинственное [...] Очень страшное озеро [...] Вода в озере была черная.
Со дна пузырями поднимался болотный газ. (1982, 3: 604)

The lake was secretive [...] It was a very frightening lake [...]. The water in the lake was black. Swampy gas rose in bubbles from the bottom.

Besides his connection with the Meshchora region, which Paustovsky closely associated with the culture and spiritual qualities of the Russian nation, he also felt a strong kinship with the northern part of the country. He describes how his first visits to Leningrad and Karelia overwhelmed him. He believes that his first experience of the white nights over

the Neva River did more to deepen his understanding of Russian poetry than dozens of books and many hours of reflection could have. This realisation is brought about by the soft reflection of the Neva on the windows of the Hermitage Art Museum. He links his own feelings to those that the poet Alexander Blok (1880–1921) experienced during a visit to the Gulf of Finland, when he came to the realisation that the northern part of Russia meant much more to him than the quiet beauty of its landscape would warrant. The colours of the sky in this region originating from the Northern Lights reflected his moods varying from tranquillity to turmoil. In this instance, Paustovsky (1986: 15) quotes an excerpt from a poem by Alexander Blok:

... One dawn
Has stretched its hand to another
[...]
A mist, now pink, now blue,
And in the sea a dark drowning cloud
Shoots from its eyes in angry death throes
Flashes of light, now red, now purple.

Paustovsky's attraction to the lakes in northern Russia is evident in his description of them, which contrasts with his depiction of the lakes of *The Meshchora region* as dark, threatening and impenetrable. He admits that he is attracted to the soft and dim surfaces, particularly of the northern lakes at night time. This sentiment is reflected in his short story, *Lump sugar* (1937), in which a first person narrator describes a visit to the northern town of Voznesenye during the season of the white nights. Although this lake fills him with melancholy and uneasiness, he also experiences a feeling of peace and tranquillity enhanced by the moon hanging above the lake.

Пароход пришел в полночь. Серебряная луна низко висела над озером [...]

И сейчас за окном, у калитки соседнего дома, стояли две девушки и, обнявшись, смотрели на тусклое озеро. Как всегда бывает белой ночью, лица девушек казались бледными от волнения, печальными и красивыми. (1983, 6: 183–186)

The steamer passed by. A silver moon hung low above the lake.

And behind the window, at the gate of the neighbouring house stood two girls they looked at the dim lake. As it is always the case during a white night, their faces looked pale from emotion, sad and beautiful [...]

Here, the night landscape is associated with the white nights, their eternal twilights and silver moon. The word silver has its origin in Sanskrit referring to a whitish, grey colour similar to that of the moon. In contrast to the golden colour of the sun which represents activity, the silver moon is a symbol of passiveness and harmonious coexistence between people and nature. In mythology the moon is associated with the female qualities of nature, whereas the sun is a symbol representing the male principle. Although the moon reflects the sun rays, unlike the sun, it changes in form within a cycle of twenty-eight days, and exerts a powerful influence on the biological rhythms of the people and planet. The moon is therefore a symbol of renewal, growth and fertility, primarily related to the life-supporting source on earth, water.⁹³

As it was the case with the Russian forests which Paustovsky credited with enhancing the artist's vocabulary, so it is the case with Russia's water phenomena. By referring to his own experience as a writer, he relies on the imagery of water in depicting all the various stages through which a writer has to pass in order to find a creative experience. He also points at the important role that lexicon plays in a literary work. Ecocritics in general,

⁹³ *Dictionnaire des Symboles*. 1982. Chevalier, J. Gheerbrant, A. Paris: 589–595.

propose that the difference between an experienced and non-experienced writer can be determined by the way in which their language reflects the spirit of the region where it originated as explained in *The ecocriticism reader*.⁹⁴ Even on this occasion, Paustovsky's position coincides with that of ecocritics. In his collection of essays *The golden rose* on good writing skills he too relies on the imagery related to water and weather phenomena when speaking of the creative process.

He examines how a writer receives the inspiration that enables him to put his pen on paper by asking the question; how does a thought originate in a writer's mind and finally results in the writing of a literary work? He explains this by comparing the first thought that enters a writer's mind to the sudden flash of lightning in the sky before a storm. The electricity generated by a forthcoming storm accumulates for many days above the earth, and immediately after the lightning there is a downpour. Whereas the lightning is compared to the stimulus for creative writing, the downpour is compared to the maturing of the thought through the thinking or work process, which finally becomes the book.

It is significant that the novelist uses the imagery of lightning to portray the awakening of imaginative and creative thoughts in the mind of a writer. Traditionally lightning symbolises a fertilising and productive power. On a spiritual level lightning could also be considered as an internal, spiritual light. The momentary seeing of a flash of lightning leaves a permanent, engraved impression on the person who saw it, and in much the same way, a writer receives a flash of inspiration for the creation of a literary work.

Paustovsky analyses not only the similarity between a flash of lightning in the sky and the first flash of inspiration that serves as the stimulation for literary activity, but also their differences. He notes that, in contrast to the sharply outlined dazzling illumination of a dark sky, a thought is often imprecise, illusive or blurred. It has to develop in the

⁹⁴ *The ecocriticism reader*. 1996. Ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. Athens, London.

mind of the writer and germinate from the seed of inspiration for a novel to the stage where the author becomes aware of the direction that his writing should follow. After inspiration has appeared to a writer, the concept gradually grows in his mind, and finally results in a literary creation. The author uses the image of torrential rain to illustrate this process. This is how he puts it:

Как рождается замысел? [...]

Замысел – это молния. Много дней накапливается над землей электричество [...]

Почти тотчас же вслед за молнией обрушивается ливень.

Замысел, так же как молния, возникает в сознании человека, насыщенном мыслями, чувствами и заметками памяти [...]

Для появления замысла, как и для появления молнии, нужен чаще всего ничтожный толчок [...].

Если молния – замысел, то ливень – это воплощение замысла. Это стройные потоки образов и слов. Это книга. (Paustovsky, 1982, 192-193)

How does an intention originate?

An intention is lightning. For many days the electricity accumulates above the earth.

Nearly immediately after the lightning there is a downpour.

An intention, as it is the case with lightning, appears in the consciousness of a person saturated with thoughts, feelings and notes of recollection [...]

For the appearance of a thought, as well as for the appearance of lightning, an insignificant stimulus is above all necessary [...] whereas lightning is a thought – a downpour is the fulfilling of the thought. It is the harmonious flow of images and words. It is a book.

Another aspect related to the writing skills of a writer and underscored by the imagery of water and weather phenomena is encapsulated by his opinion that a writer must not live on a planet of his own, but must be constantly in contact with the real world. Paustovsky understood that for the process of the crystallisation of a literary work to take place, the writer's mind must never become distant from life. The author often uses soft rain and, tranquil seas to depict happy emotions. However, during his writing career he came to the understanding that people often experience destructive emotions that may sometimes lead to self destruction.

In his autobiographical essay, 'The storms of Livni', in *The golden rose* (1964), Paustovsky speaks of his transformation from a writer who reflected only a 'rosy' picture of life, to the one who is able to perceive its negative aspects as well. This explains how he matured in his writing by gaining an insight into the whole spectrum of human emotions, which enabled him to portray not only happy people, but also those who find themselves in a situation of despair.

He illustrates this by referring to his first novel, *The romanticists* (1923), which was written after he spent some time in the Livni.⁹⁵ He chose this specific region because he believed that in there he would meet romantic, artistically inclined people that he intended to portray in his novel. As soon as he arrived, dramatic events began to develop. He met there Anfisa, a nineteen year old girl who was in love with the sixteen year old boy, Kolya, the son of a poor widow. Realising that it would never be possible to save

⁹⁵ (Paustovsky) Паустовский, К. 1981. *Собрание сочинений*, Т. 1. Москва.

the life of the boy, suffering from tuberculosis, Anfisa became depressed and committed suicide. This happened on a night during a fierce storm which Paustovsky describes in the following way.

Через несколько дней я проснулся среди ночи от раскатов грома.

[...] Гром расколол небо и, казалось, одним ударом вогнал домишко в землю по самую крышу. (1982, 3: 205–206).

After several days I woke up in the middle of the night from the peals of thunder

[...] The thunder split the sky and seemed to with one stroke drove the little house into the earth through the roof itself.

Paustovsky describes the storm in detail, because in his mind the violence of the storm equalled the shocking way in which Anfisa died. This is a typical example of how the author's portrayal of nature reflects human emotions.

He admits that the suicide episode forced him to face the reality of life, different from the fictional world of his protagonists in *The romanticists*. For the first time in his life, he came to understand that interesting people are not always those endowed with special artistic qualities but rather they are ordinary people confronted with the daily problems of life that bring out their special qualities. With hindsight, Paustovsky considered this episode to be a turning point in his writing career, because it altered some of his misconceptions about the outlandish life of artists. The violence of the storm and the death of Anfisa made him understand that life has deeper dimensions than the rhetoric of amateur artists as expressed in *The romanticists*, and that these aspects of life are revealed to a person when least expected. He came to the conclusion that such experiences enable writers to write with far greater compassion about the suffering of ordinary people, such as children, old people, farmers, fishermen, etc. This idea runs like a leitmotiv in his autobiography *Story of a life*.

Another dimension of the importance of the link between water and the creative process is conveyed by Paustovsky who uses the metaphor of a river to express his own writing experience to less experienced writers. In the third volume of his autobiography he contends that most writers wish to write a story without taking into account the strict rules set out in handbooks on the writing of prose.⁹⁶ However, he stresses that these rules must not be disregarded because they channel a writer's hazy ideas into a current of precise thought, and guide them towards the completion of a literary work, similar to the way a river carries its waters to the end of its natural course.

Paustovsky uses the image of a river to show that a writer must have a profound knowledge of the aspects of nature he describes. The relevant quote from Paustovsky was picked up by Slonim.⁹⁷

One cannot write a book without knowing what kinds of herbs grow in forest glades and in swamps [...] which winds bring the rain and when the drought [...] One cannot write books without having experienced the wind before sun or the dark October night under the open sky. The hands of a writer should not only be calloused from the pen but also hardened by the water of the river.

This quote is another illustration of Paustovsky's belief that nature and art are inseparable. He contends that similar to forests that inspire the work of writers, artists and musicians, water in the form of a river is also a source of inspiration. If writers do not understand the expressiveness of words depicting water and weather phenomena, they will never be able to communicate the real meaning of such words to their readers and the way in which these words mirror typical aspects of the Russian culture or have a specific connotation to Russian people. The author underlines this aspect in all his autobiographical works for example *Story of a life*.

⁹⁶ (Paustovsky) Паустовский, К. 1982. *Собрание сочинений*, Т. 4. Москва.

⁹⁷ Slonim, M. 1977. *Soviet Russian Literature*. London, Oxford, New York: 121.

It is not only the words describing forests and rivers that familiarised Paustovsky anew with the richness of the Russian vocabulary. In this respect, he also uses words referring to rain. In his short story *In the heart of Russia* (1950) the author describes an experimental film on rain that was released in Moscow in the 1930s. It was shown exclusively to people connected to the film industry because it was felt that other people not understanding the film would leave the cinema perplexed. This film showed rain from every imaginable angle; on the black asphalt of the town, on the leaves during the daytime and at night, heavy rain pelting down and drizzling rain, rain with the sun out, rain on a river and rain on the sea, air bubbles in puddles, wet trains through the field, and a host of different rain clouds.

Paustovsky confesses that this film made such a profound impression on him that it influenced the way in which he described rain for the rest of his life. In his view, an author should not write in vague terms about rain, but should strive to gain knowledge of all the different types of rain. The writer must understand all the connotations of the words he uses to describe rain, in particular their cultural dimensions. It is only then that the reader will be able to appreciate the true meaning of the words describing rain (1986: 274).

As in the case with forests, the author of essays in *The Golden Rose* rediscovered the meaning of words referring to rain during a summer which he spent in central Russia. He discovered how an ordinary phenomenon such as rain can reflect the extraordinary. During a visit to the Meshchora region, for example, he became aware of the ‘poetry’ of words describing rain. He noticed the fresh smell of a dusty road after a fall of rain, but he had never listened carefully to the sound of rain nor perceived the monotonous colour of rainy air. He admits that observing the rain enriched his perception, understanding and even memory of things.

In his collection of essays the *The golden rose* Paustovsky mentions the different names given to the manifestations of rain in the Russian language.

Я, конечно, знал, что есть дожди морозящие, слепые, обложные, грибные, спорые, дожди, идущие полосами – полосовые, косые, сильные окатные дожди и, наконец, ливни (1982, 3: 231).

I of course knew that there is drizzling, blind, incessant, mushroom rains, as well as quick rains, strip rains (falling in strips), slanting, strong, pouring rains and finally pelting rains.

All these types of rain feature in Paustovsky's prose. He explains that not everyone will experience the same feelings, or have the same understanding, when listening to or reading words portraying rain (1983, 3: 231). To him this is a subjective matter. It is one thing to speculatively know a specific type of rain. However, it is necessary to understand that each type of rain contains its own poetry, its own signs that are completely different from other kinds of rain. It is only when a writer understands what exactly is associated with each word describing rain that he would be able to communicate its full meaning to readers.

He notes that at the onset of rain a few drops usually spatter on the dust roads and then the rain begins to spread. It is at this stage that one smells the dust and grasses. According to the author, most people in central Russia are only aware of the difference between soft and pelting rain, but in fact there are many more kinds of rain. He wonders if they will know the difference between different types of rain such as 'fighting rain' (спорые) and 'mushroom rain' (грибные) (1982, 3: 232). He explains that the word 'спорый' means quick, or fast. This type of rain is always accompanied by noise, in particular, when it falls on a river where it sounds like breaking glass and the rain drops resemble 'shining pearls' (1982, 3: 233).

'Mushroom rain', on the contrary, falls softly and 'drowsily' from a low hanging cloud. Its drops are always warm and sometimes have a yellowish colour. It barely touches the leaves below. When 'mushroom rain' falls the sky is foggy. The name itself originates in the fact that this type of rain promotes the growth of mushrooms as it soaks the ground thoroughly. This is a cultural phenomenon in itself because mushrooms are an important ingredient in Russian cuisine. A table with Russian delicacies during the festive celebrations of the New Year and Easter would seem inadequate without a mushroom dish. Another type of rain that Paustovsky believes has a cultural connotation is 'blind' rain. He explains that the local people in the Meshchora region compare blind rain to the tears of a tsarevna expressing either her happiness or her sadness. Although the author does not elaborate on this image, it demonstrates an important aspect namely that a nation's culture is often closely related to the way in which it experiences nature.

Further on the issue of rain, Paustovsky says that Russians, in particular those of the Meshchora region, find many ways of predicting that rain is coming. When the sun sits on the clouds and vapour descends to the earth, when swallows fly low, when roosters crow loudly and the clouds are dragging through the sky with long foggy strands, these are all signs that it is about to rain. When the clouds get stretched out and there is a faint smell of moisture, it is a sign that the rain is already falling somewhere else.

Paustovsky believes that a writer has reached a high degree of mastery when he is able to simultaneously describe the sound and the visual qualities of words that describe nature, in particular, those referring to water or weather phenomena. He illustrates this by referring to the way that an accomplished writer is able to pick up the combination of sound and visual qualities of words in the language of children. The reason for this is that children are mostly unbiased in their observation of their natural environment, and spontaneously describe it in the way they really see it.

In *The golden rose*, he describes how a child will ‘hear’ and at the same time ‘see’ a storm and all its effects:

Недавно в деревне один маленький мальчик пришел во время грозы ко мне в комнату и, глядя на меня большими от восторга глазами, сказал:

– Пойдем смотреть грома! (1982, 3: 234)

Recently in the village a little boy came to me in my room during the time of a storm and looking at me with eyes big from delight, said:

‘Let us go and look at the thunders!’

The author demonstrates that children are very specific and direct in their language usage. This excerpt has a semantic significance. The boy understands that the thunder was all around them and that it was heard in various places at the same time. However, he concentrates on the visual aspect of the storm, namely the flashes of lightning. When he says ‘let us go and *look* at the thunder’ he does not refer to the noise of the thunder, but to the spectacle of the lightning.

The portrayal of the water and weather phenomena in Paustovsky’s prose also refers to people’s emotions such as happiness, sadness or turbulence.

The interaction between humans and water and weather phenomena, and the way in which these transform the human experience, are central to Paustovsky’s prose and the portrayal of people in his prose serves to support this thesis further. This appears in particular in his prose works such as his short stories, and his collections of essays *The Meshchora region* (1939) and *The golden rose*. His portrayal can be divided into several categories, as discussed below:

By his own admission, Paustovsky's early prose places the emotional relationship between people and nature in a fictional context divorced from real life. He confesses that when he began writing in 1912 he had a preference for portraying nature, and especially water, in an unusual manner, based largely on his imagination. In the dull apartment, in landlocked Kiev, where he spent his childhood, he was constantly surrounded by the 'whispers of an exotic world' which was conjured by the force of his own imagination. He points out that in his early prose he did not distinguish between the Black Sea, the Baltic Sea or the Mediterranean, and described them in a one-dimensional way as always having the same light blue colour, and as calm, never stormy, not knowing that their real character varies from peaceful to turbulent (1986: 7–19).

As can be seen from the analysis of his prose, later, during the socialist realist period, Paustovsky veered from the portrayal of people as preoccupied with their 'exotic' worlds to the portrayal of people firmly placed in their reality. Adhering to the dictates of their ideology, they depleted the natural resources of the country to pave the way for their grandiose projects. Such is the world depicted in *Colchis* and *Kara-Bugaz*. In line with the communist ideology, this process was meant to create a paradise on earth for the 'new' Soviet man. However, this policy did not take into account the ecological impact on nature. This is why during the Soviet period in Russia the psychological and spiritual relationship between Russians and their environment deteriorated from a harmonious, respectful relationship into one of inequality, where nature showed signs of abuse.

According to the literary critic Slonim, during his later years Paustovsky was no longer duped by the Soviet ideology that prompted Russian citizens to transform nature according to communist principles. Slonim (1977, 122–123) maintains that judging by his autobiographical works, Paustovsky came to the belief that as long as the Soviet government's policies continued, the 'magnificent world of justice and culture is still a dream'. The scholar also points out that in Paustovsky's opinion 'new societies begin where there is love for women, beauty, and devotion to youth; where goodness, humanity

and a feeling of solidarity are considered the highest values', for kind-hearted people avoid committing acts of destruction or violence against nature (ibid.). Slonim's reading of Paustovsky indicates that the new Soviet people are yet to reach such heights.

Some twenty years into his writing career, Paustovsky abandoned his initial preference for what he calls the 'exotic' but he chose to stay true to the 'romantic'. He says:

We often make the mistake of confusing two different concepts, the so-called exotic and romantic. We substitute the purely exotic for the romantic, forgetting that the former is only one of the external forms of the latter and has no independent content of its own.

The exotic as such is divorced from real life, whereas the romantic is firmly rooted in life, and feeds on its rich sap. I abandoned the exotic, but I did not abandon the romantic and never will. I will never renounce its purifying fire, its compulsion for human warmth and spiritual generosity, and its constant quest. (1986: 13)

In his prose and in particular in his short stories written between the 1930s and 1940s, Paustovsky was able to harmonise his romantic inclination with the principles of socialist realism. This is stressed by Leonid Heller who explains that Paustovsky's prose reflects the romantic character of the actions of the new Soviet men and women, who sought to change the world that existed before the Revolution into a world that would accommodate everyone, and where no problem would be too big to solve.⁹⁸ This romantic inclination was in fact part and parcel of the Soviet dogma and it is known in literary criticism as revolutionary romanticism. This entailed that people could exchange the possible for the impossible such as transforming a tropical region, by planting non-indigenous plants (*Colchis*). Every activity of the new Soviet people from the smallest to

⁹⁸ Heller, L. 1985. Konstantin Paustovsky, écrivain modèle. *Cahiers du monde russe* juillet-décembre: 313-352.

the biggest was considered as heroic, provided that it aimed to promote communist ideals.⁹⁹ These people thought of themselves as being ‘huger than life’.

In *A tale of woods* (1948) the author uses rain imagery to describe a period of wellbeing in the life of a young girl, Fenya, who is the fifteen-year-old daughter of a forest warden Tikhon. Tikhon and Fenya, live in the house of Tchaikovsky in Rudoy Yar. This story is about Tchaikovsky’s love for the Russian woodlands and his strive to conserve them. It also tells about the way in which Tchaikovsky’s music and his love for nature influenced the life of Fenya.

Once, on a rainy day Fenya ran into the house. Tchaikovsky was enchanted by the sight of the girl.

В избу вбежала Феня – дочь Тихона ... С ее волос стекали капли дождя. Две капли повисли на кончиках маленьких ушей. Когда из-за тучи ударило солнце, капли в ушах у Фени заблестели, как алмазные серьги.

Чайковский любовался девочкой. (1982, 3: 7)

Fenya, the daughter of Tikhon, ran into the log house. Drops of rain trickled from her hair. Two drops hung from the tips of her small ears. When the sun suddenly appeared from behind the clouds the drops on Fenya’s ears sparkled like diamond earrings.

Tchaikovsky admired the girl.

The narrator’s emphasis on the raindrops on Fenya’s ears draws on the universal symbolism of rain drops being a sign of the divine received on earth, and all the more so

⁹⁹ Niqueux, M. Le romantisme révolutionnaire et sa place dans le réalisme socialiste. *Cahiers slaves* 8: 472–280

if they appear on the body of a young girl.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore the drops of rain on Fenya's ears symbolise her purity. The image of the 'diamond raindrops' reflecting the internal radiance of the young woman inspires Tchaikovsky to compose music that expresses the freshness and vitality of youth (1982, 3: 7–9). Although the story unfolds at the end of the 19th century, and before the imposition of socialist realism, Fenya is portrayed to fit the socialist realist image of a young Communist.

After her memorable encounter with the composer, she now considers him as 'family'. Even, in her old age, Fenya is portrayed as still having the pair of raindrop-shaped diamond earrings which Tchaikovsky presented to her as a gift. However, her initial joy of having met Tchaikovsky is obliterated when during the Second World War the Germans occupying the house in which Tchaikovsky lived kill her during the celebration of one of them being honoured with an Iron Cross. Through this narration Paustovsky shows that the happiness of youth, in this case symbolised by the diamond-shaped raindrops on Fenya's ears, does not necessarily last forever.

In several of his short stories Paustovsky uses the images of rain to express the attraction between men and women. It is the attraction of kindred souls, because a romantic involvement was not encouraged in Soviet writing. 'A rainy dawn' (1945) describes the arrival of Major Kuzmin the small town of Navoloki at the end of the Second World War. His ship is anchored in the harbour town for a few hours. He disembarks because he promised Bashilov, one of his fellow officers, that he would deliver a letter to his wife. When Kuzmin arrives in the town it is early morning and it is drizzling. The rain creates a feeling of forlorn sadness in him which is increased by the smell of the muddy river and the hollow sound of dogs barking in a distance. Apart from the drizzling rain, there is a heavy mist which makes Kuzmin realise that he might find himself in an inconvenient situation. He feels the strangeness of the Navoloki town and feels uneasy about meeting a

¹⁰⁰ *Dictionnaire des symboles*. 1982. Ed. Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant.

woman that he does not know. When the rain changes from drizzle to pelting, his feeling of uncertainty changes to anguish. The rain parallels his increasing disquiet.

After a taxi ride, he arrives at the house of Olga Andreevna, the wife of Bashilov. Upon entering the house he is overwhelmed by a feeling of peace, tranquillity and a sense of *déjà vu*, as though he vaguely remembers happy events that had taken place in his distant past. The rain becomes a drizzle once again, signifying the peacefulness that he now experiences in the company of this kind and intelligent woman. His attention is drawn to a volume of poetry on the piano in the room, in which he sees a poem written by Blok, called 'A long road is easy' (1982, 3: 320), that he has long since forgotten, but which mirrors his present situation.

Paustovsky admits that 'A rainy dawn' was inspired by Blok's poetry (1982, 3) but is especially reminiscent of the poems in Blok's collection of poetry, *The unknown woman*¹⁰¹. Paustovsky quotes the following lines:

I went out into the darkness of the rainy night
And in the old home, at the window,
I recognised the thoughtful (pensive) eyes
My melancholies [...]
I admired her endlessly,
[...]

These few lines of Blok's poetry create an ambiance of peace which Paustovsky recreated in 'A rainy dawn'. Blok describes emotions which Paustovsky found similar to those Kuzmin felt towards Olga Andreevna. Kuzmin's attraction to Olga evokes a memory of his own life. The feeling of belonging he experiences in her home is something that is currently not part of his life. a feeling that these emotions might be

¹⁰¹ (Blok) Блок, А. 1995. *Незнакомка*. Москва.

more than a dream, but the reflection of his longing for human warmth and acceptance. When Olga accompanies him back to the ship at the break of dawn in soft rain, Kuzmin realises that a bond was established between them and that they are kindred souls.

In most cultures dawn symbolises the finding of light, equal to finding hope after a period of darkness and unhappiness. The imagery of the delicate rain stresses the ephemeral and yet comforting character of their relationship between Kuzmin and Olga. As in the relationship between Blok and the unknown woman, the connection between Olga and Kuzmin has a mystical nature. It surpasses the limitations of human comprehension, because there is an inexplicable spiritual impact on the lives of these two unhappy people.

A theme that often appears in Blok's early poetry, as well as in Paustovsky's prose, is the meeting between a man and a woman. The strangers would meet fleetingly on a rainy autumn day. Paustovsky's essay 'Isaac Levitan' (1937) echoes the rainy setting in 'Rainy dawn' and depicts an episode in the life of the painter when he met an enigmatic woman on a rainy day. This might have been one of the few brighter moments in Levitan's life. Levitan felt attracted to the woman because of her 'dreamlike' appearance, even though he did not speak to her. He conveys this attraction in his painting *Autumn day at Sokolniki* (1879). Although many art critics regard this painting as 'naïve', probably because its subject matter, it must have struck Paustovsky as the one reflecting the inseparable connection between nature and human feelings. Thus he imagined the scene in Levitan's painting as actually taking place and he described this 'silent encounter in the following words:

Шел редкий дождь [...]

Незнакомка стояла у калитки и пыталась раскрыть маленький зонтик, но он не раскрывался. Наконец он подался, и дождь зашуршал по его шелковому верху.[...]

Левитан не видел ее лица, – оно было закрыто зонтиком. [...] В неверном свете он различил бледное лицо. Оно показалось ему знакомым и красивым. (1982, 3: 534)

Rare rain fell [...]

The unknown woman stood at the gates and tried to open a small umbrella, but it did not open. [...] Finally it yielded [...] Levitan did not see her face – it was hidden by the umbrella [...] Her pale face was outlined in the faltering light. It seemed to him to be beautiful and familiar.

The rainy autumn day with its low grey clouds is in keeping with the sadness that the lonely woman might have felt. Judging by Levitan paintings, it seems as if he always tried to portray the infinitely touching and often gloomy emotions that are strongly present in the Russian psyche. One can assume that it is this aspect of his art that attracted Paustovsky's attention.

While the rain in Paustovsky's prose often reflects the ambience of emotionally profound meetings between people, in other instances it also suggests a premonition of death, as can be seen in 'The Telegram' (1946). This short story depicts an old woman, Katerina Petrovna, clinging to life, because she is awaits a letter from her only daughter, Nastya, who is working in Leningrad. Nastya never thinks about her mother. It is as if she does not exist. The persistent October rain is colder and more gloomy than usual, and accentuates Katerina's anticipation of death. While listening to the sound of the rain she writes to her daughter:

‘Ненаглядная моя, – писала Катерина Петровна .– Зиму эту я не переживу. Приезжай хоть на день [...] Стара я стала и слаба до того, что тяжело мне не что ходить, а даже сидеть и лежать, – смерть забыла ко мне дорогу. Сад сохнет – совсем уж не тот, – да я его и не вижу. Нынче осень плохая. Так тяжело; вся жизнь, кажется, не была такая длинная, как одна эта осень’. (1983, 6: 380–381)

‘My darling’, wrote Katerina Petrovna. I shan’t live through winter. Come for at least one day [...] I’m old and weak it’s a horror for me to move and even sit or lie down; death has forgotten the way to me. The garden is withering, it is not the same any more, and I can’t see it. This is a bad autumn. It so hard, my whole life, it seems, has never been as long as this one autumn”.

When Nastya receives the letter, she is shocked. However, she arrives too late, and her mother died without knowing that she came. In his essay ‘Incisions in the heart’ in *The Golden Rose*, Paustovsky admits that this story is based on reality, The character of Katerina Petrovna is based on that of an old lady in whose house he lived one autumn, whilst pursuing his writing. The house was cold, damp and dark, and the old lady admitted that her health was not at all good. He had a feeling that she was soon going to die without her relatives present and this inspired him to write ‘The telegram’.

On the basis of an ecocritical analysis of Paustovsky’s fiction one may assume that the river imagery is useful to convey the psyche of people. This aspect of Paustovsky’s prose may be interpreted in terms of literature ‘giving a voice’ to nature, as Manes, an ecocritic who supports an animistic view of nature, puts it.¹⁰² Manes believes that especially effective is the movement and force of rivers to portray the characters’ inner turbulence. Ecocritics consider rivers in their different forms and movement to be of foremost importance in prose where nature features. This was illustrated in Paustovsky’s short story ‘A night in October’(1946) where the Oka River ‘takes on a voice’

In Paustovsky’s prose a river in movement mirrors the way people react when confronted by danger. ‘A night in October’ is told from a first-person perspective, a writer who speaks of his experience when on the last boat of the season on his way to a small town

¹⁰² Manes, C. 1996. *Nature and silence*. In: *The ecocriticism reader*. Ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, Athens, London.

near Ryazan, in Central Russia. It is the late autumn of 1945 and he intends to do some writing. He strikes up a conversation with the Sapper Captain, Zuyev, who is on his way to the town of Novoselsk. The writer and Zuyev intend to cross over to the other bank of the Oka River and then walk through the meadows to the village of Zaborye.

Captain Zuyev feels elated. After his traumatic experiences in the Second World War, he now feels the joy of once again finding himself in these familiar woodlands where he spent many years as a forest warden. Zuyev's long-anticipated reunion with the Oka River encapsulates a major principle of ecocriticism, namely that humans and their natural surroundings need one another for mutual wellbeing, an important part of it being that nature provides a favourable environment. When the two men walk towards Zaborye it becomes clear to them that the Oka is unwelcoming and does not resemble the river they know. They are afraid of the rising waters and realise that they cannot cross it. All that they see are the muddy waves of the river and the swaying tree tops.

When the men realise that they might die, they begin to think about the meaning of life and a possible early death (1983, 6: 394). Through such a portrayal the river becomes the manifestation of their inner turmoil. Although the story expresses the harmony between people and nature, this relation also seems to be a precarious relationship. *A night in October* expresses one of the key principles that ecocritics use to analyse a literary work, namely how nature influences the psyche of the people.

Another short story in which Paustovsky depicts the anguish of night time through the imagery of water and weather phenomena is 'Lyonka from the Little Lake'(1937). One day Paustovsky and his friend Ruvim decided to visit the region of Little Lake and they got lost in 'pattering rain' at the approaching of night. The description of the 'beating autumn rain' mirrors the feeling of desolation that a person experiences when lost at night without a possibility of getting help:

День быстро темнел, сумерки уже зарождались под неприветливым небом, и приближалась ночь – волчья ночь в болотах, полная треска сухих ветвей, шороха капель и невыносимого чувства одиночества. (1983, 6: 200)

The light was fading fast, and dusk was gathering under the unfriendly sky, heralding the approach of night – a bleak night in the marshes, with nothing but the cracking of dead branches, the pattering of rain and an unbearable feeling of loneliness.

When they lost all hope of finding their direction, there were saved by a young boy, Lyonka, who told them that they were lucky, because they recently found the bones of an old woman who got lost.

In his short story 'Isaac Levitan' (1937) Paustovsky depicts how the depression of people can be exacerbated when facing turbulent rivers. This was the case with Levitan, who left Moscow to pursue his painting career on the banks of the Volga River. There he experienced increased feelings of gloom, and found it difficult to concentrate. In his depression, he tried to avoid contact with people, whom he now considered his enemies. According to Paustovsky, Chekhov (1860–1904), who was Levitan's friend, tried to save him from these spells of depression, however unsuccessfully. Paustovsky tells how Chekhov realised that his attempt to save Levitan was a failure especially when he saw the effect of the Volga River on him. The turbid waters of the Volga reflect Levitan's dark mood.

Первая поездка на Волгу была неудачна. Моросили дожди, волжская вода помутнела [...] От надоедливости дождя слезились окна избы в деревне на берегу Волги, где поселился Левитан [...]

Великая река казалась Левитану преддверием хмурого ада. Рассвет не приносил облегчения. (1982, 3: 541)

The first trip to the Volga was unsuccessful. Rains drizzled; the Volga water became turbid. [...] Due to the tiresome rain the windows of the izba in the village on the shore of the Volga where Levitan settled became shrouded in mist [...]

The great river seemed to Levitan to be the threshold of a gloomy hell. The daybreak did not bring any relief.

As in 'A night in October', he too communicates how people see nature as a reflection of their own feelings. The turbid waters of the Volga exacerbate Levitan's depression, which was an illness from which he suffered during his whole life. This story illustrates yet another principle of ecocriticism according to which those writers who focus on nature in their works are also students of the mind as well as good psychologists (Manes, 1996).

In Paustovsky's prose nature reflects either the sorrowful or joyous emotions of his protagonists. In the case of Levitan the sombre colour of the water in the Volga River incarnates his depression and in 'A night in October' the turbulent water of the Oka River mirrors the fear of the protagonists. His short story, 'The 'Old boat' (1939), tells a story of a young girl learning to appreciate the variety of weather phenomena when seeing an electric storm. The lightning provokes fear in a group of people travelling by train to the Crimea. Among the passengers is Natasha, a schoolgirl from Leningrad, who has not yet travelled in her country, and has no knowledge of the variety and extent of Russia's natural world. When lightning strikes a nearby tree, Natasha is in awe of this manifestation of nature; 'thunder booms at the ends of the earth' and 'breaks into the fire-lanes and glades' (1983, 6: 255-266). This event changes Natasha's view of life. For the first time she no longer sees nature as an indifferent backdrop, but as something that should be respected. Her excitement and fear of the unknown, brought to life while she was travelling to the Crimea, are reflected in the turmoil of nature. Her amazement at the unpredictability of nature makes her realise that she should open up to nature and appreciate all its different aspects.

Paustovsky often associates the moon with the innocence of young people beginning a new life, and the tenderness of the first experience of a blooming love. 'The sweetbriar' (1951) tells the story of a young girl, Masha Klimova, who, like Natasha, travels to a region unknown to her where she is going to take up a post as a forest warden. On the advice of her grandmother, she takes a steamer instead of the train. During this trip she discovers the beauty of the moonlit scenery. It left an indelible impression on her:

Маша так часто вспоминала недавнюю поездку, что однажды она ей даже приснилась. Приснилась густой шиповник в росе. Стояли сумерки. Молодой, нежный месяц, будто забытый жницей серебряный серп, лежал на синем пологие ночи. И было так тихо и легко на сердце, что Маша даже смеялась во сне. (1983, б: 464)

Masha remembered her recent trip so often that one day she even dreamed about it. She dreamed about the luxuriant sweetbriar in the dew. It was dusk. The young tender moon, like a silver sickle forgotten by a reaper, lay on the dark blue curtain of night, and she felt such peace and lightness in her heart that she even laughed in her sleep.

In this case, the moon can be seen as the symbol of the celebration of life by virtue of its cycles that continuously renew themselves. The ascending moon also conveys that Masha is no longer a teenager, but that she is entering into the next cycle of life, namely that of a young woman at the brink of adulthood.

During his whole life Paustovsky had a very special relationship with the sea, although he frequently describes it as dangerous, replicating the terror that people feel facing it. In his short story, 'Inscription on a boulder' (1964), the narrator tells of a visit that he once undertook to a small town on the shores of the Baltic Sea. On a rock in the town he found an inscription which reads: 'В память всех, кто погиб и погибнет в море' – 'In memory of all those who died and will die at sea'.

The rock resembled hundreds of others that he had seen in fishing towns, therefore he did not really pay any attention to it. Eventually he came to realise that this rock is different when a Latvian writer provided an explanation

‘Это очень мужественная надпись. Она говорит, что люди никогда не сдадутся и несмотря ни на что, будут делать свое дело. Я бы поставил эту надпись эпитафией к любой книге о человеческом труде’. (1982, 3: 175)

‘This is a very brave inscription. It says that people never surrender, and, notwithstanding whatever may happen, they will carry out their task. I would have put this inscription as an epigraph to a book on human labour.’

Paustovsky associates the sea with people’s emotions of happiness and sadness. In his short story, ‘Sea inspiration’ (1935) the attitude towards the sea reflects and epitomises the innocence and freshness of youth that is present in a child called Mishuk. His father is a failed writer who is undergoing a creative crisis. He is disenchanted, because he knows that readers are no longer interested in his prose, but he does not know how to correct this situation.

Mishuk’s first visit to the sea fills him with amazement and the feeling of a miracle taking place. He asks his father ‘what is the noise there’ to which his father impatiently answers; ‘the sea’. When the boy asks ‘what does the sea do’, his father is only able to offer a one-word response; ‘nothing’. Mishuk tries to discover why there is such a thing as the sea. He begins to cry and realises that he is afraid of the sea. The driver taking the family to the sea explains to Mishuk’s that the sea is ‘there to swim in’. Sitting on the warm sand, the child expresses his wonderment at seeing ‘horses’ on the sea. His mother informs him that they are merely waves. She conveys to her son that these simple moments of joy make life worthwhile. In contrast to her husband, she is a sensitive person, and understands that Mishuk is a child experiencing the sea for the first time in

his life, and that to him it is something surprising, new and unknown. She also feels that the sea is a reflection of their marriage varying from tranquil and happy to turbulent. She realises that her husband's fluctuating emotions are related to being a successful as a writer. These emotional extremes have a negative influence on their marriage. It is thus with sadness that she compares the fresh innocence of Mishuk to the bored, cynical attitude of her husband. She senses that Mishuk is asking the type of questions that her husband should be asking, which would render his prose more meaningful.

Mishuk's father's crisis deepens. He leaves his family at the seaside and returns to Moscow. On a visit to the forests near the capital he realises that he owes his creativity to the sea, which was particularly inspirational during his youth. He is, however, no longer able to write as he did in his youth. His writing has become superficial and automatic, devoid of any real meaning.

After an unsettling period in his life, Mishuk's father understands that, in order to succeed, he should follow the example of Mishuk and view nature through the eyes of a child. Through this portrayal Paustovsky expresses his views on the need for literary works being grounded in the writer's observation of life and nature. A writer should ignore everything he has written before, and begin to write in a new way, motivated by life itself and not by his past failures or successes as a writer.

In this story the sea imagery epitomises the fluctuations in human emotions, which range from turbulence to tranquillity. In many works by Paustovsky, for example, *The Black Sea* (1936),¹⁰³ the author's presentation of oceans focuses on an aspect considered to be essential by ecocritics, such as the positive influence of nature on the spiritual growth of people. This is brought about by a harmonious coexistence between people and their

¹⁰³ (Paustovsky) Паустовский, К. 1982. *Собрание сочинений*, Т. 2. Москва.

natural environment. Without such a harmonious relationship, neither people nor nature would be able to function optimally.

To sum up, even this brief overview of Paustovsky's use of the imagery of water and weather phenomena justifies an analysis of his prose from the ecocritical perspective. As if in support of Glen Love's view that the natural settings in literary work are just as important as its protagonists,¹⁰⁴ Paustovsky systematically places his characters on par with nature.

In this chapter an attempt was made to demonstrate that Paustovsky refers to the images of water and water phenomena in a way that can be seen as ahead of his time. He focused on three elements which are currently also regarded by ecocritics as central to the study of literature on nature.

Firstly, Paustovsky shows how an attachment to a specific place influences a creative process. The author also uses the imagery of water and weather phenomena to depict the phases through which a writer passes to create a literary work. He admits that he himself bonded closely with the central part of Russia, the Meshchora region, as well as with the north of Russia. He expresses his attachment to these regions through his descriptions of their lakes. The dark and gloomy lakes in the Meshchora region with their impenetrable surfaces give rise to feelings of fear in him, whereas the lakes of the northern part of Russia fill him with a feeling of tranquillity and peace. He considers both these regions close to his heart.

Secondly, Paustovsky's relationship with his favourite regions in Russia extends also to a cultural level. He shows how the imagery of water and weather phenomena has promoted the development of his lexicon. An example of this is his description of the different

¹⁰⁴ Love, G. 1996. Towards an ecological ecocriticism. In: *The ecocriticism reader*. Ed. Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, Athens, London.

types of rain that appear in Russia. He attributes specific cultural connotations to these kinds of rain. His depiction of the mushroom rain relates to the growth of mushrooms, which are a very important constituent of the Russian cuisine. Soft rain, according to folklore, reminds one of the tears of happiness or sadness of a tsarevna. The author also uses the imagery of water and weather phenomena to depict the phases through which a writer passes to create a literary work.

Thirdly, Paustovsky's portrayal of water and weather phenomena conveys the way in which the emotions of his characters are matched by their natural environment. In 'A rainy dawn' the birth of a spiritual understanding between the officer Kuzmin and a woman whom he visits for a short time is reflected by the soft rain, highlighting the soft contours of nature. Another example of how water conveys the personal emotions of people is the way the gloomy surface of the Volga River echoes Levitan's depression. It is through weather phenomena such as lightning and the moon that Paustovsky portrays the feelings of both excitement and anguish that young people experience on the brink of adulthood as in the case of the protagonist Natasha in 'The sweetbriar'.

The discussion attempted to show that Paustovsky's prose can be used by ecocritics to illustrate important ecocritical principles as it offers new insights into the relationship between people and their natural environment, in particular how nature reflects the personal emotions of people. Furthermore, it demonstrates that this relationship with nature also has deep cultural and emotional connotations.

CHAPTER FOUR

SEASONS OF THE YEAR IN PAUSTOVSKY'S PROSE

The seasons of the year feature in all Paustovsky's prose works and his versatile use of the imagery associated with them is particularly apparent in his short stories.¹⁰⁵ His depiction of the seasons constitutes a rich literary treasure from an ecocritical point of view. Ecocritics would ask the following questions. What role does the seasons of the year play in the plots of Paustovsky's short stories? Which values are expressed through his description of the seasons of the year? Is there any connection between his portrayal of the seasons and the ecological principles espoused in the 21st century and do the seasons of the year reflect human emotions?

Critics of Paustovsky's prose do not pay much attention to his depiction of summer and winter, although they generally hold his descriptions of spring and autumn in high esteem. Chistyakova¹⁰⁶ Kuprianova¹⁰⁷ and Davydova¹⁰⁸ all note that they are impressed by Paustovsky's striking descriptions of the abundant white chestnut blossoms typical of spring in Kiev. Eterley expresses his admiration for the way in which the author compares the flowers of the lime tree in spring to the 'blossoming' of a work of literature that finally comes to its fruition.¹⁰⁹ Vasilyev remarks that Paustovsky describes each leaf as a masterpiece.¹¹⁰ Kuprianova too comments on the importance of autumn in

¹⁰⁵ (Paustovsky) Паустовский, К. 1983. *Собрание сочинений*, Т. 6. Москва.

¹⁰⁶ (Chistyakova) Чистякова, И. 1986. Пейзажная живопись К. Паустовского. *Русская Речь* 5: 81–86.

¹⁰⁷ Kuprianova, N. 1982. Konstantin Paustovsky. The power of kindness. *Soviet Literature* 6: 89–92.

¹⁰⁸ (Davydova) Давыдова, М. 1997. Постигни красоту и совершенство мира: Перечитывая Повесть о жизни' К. Паустовского. *Библиотека* 6: 69–71.

(Eterley) Этерлей, Е. 1990. К. 90–летию. К. Г. Паустовского 'Золотой отблеск'. *Русская Речь* 5: 52–58.

(Vasilyev) Васильев, В. 1984. Пейзаж с человеком на переднем плане. *Литературно-художественный и Общественно-политический Журнал "Наши современники"* 12: 150–167.

Paustovsky's prose. She points out that, of all the seasons of the year, Paustovsky loved autumn the best, and that he believed that in autumn writers create their best works. She substantiates this by quoting the following words of Paustovsky.

The intense bright colours of the forests and fields fade in autumn; the rains wash out the bright green of the grass. The woods stand out like some exquisite lace work. The intense colours of summer give place to the gentle golden, reddish and silver colours. And it is not only the colours of the earth that change, but the very air itself. It is purer and colder and the horizon steps farther away than in summer. In the same way in the works of great writers and painters, the youthful over-abundance of colour and language embellishment give way in their mature years to precision and noble restraint.

As noted in the Introduction, the body of literary criticism on Paustovsky, although relatively substantial, seldom treats the place of nature in it. After the 1990s not much has been published on his prose. The existing criticism on his prose consists to a large extent of articles of which about thirty contain mainly factual information on the author's life and works. It should be mentioned that although only some critics mention Paustovsky's remarkable use of associative imagery, they, with a few exceptions, do not analyse this imagery in-depth.

The scholar, Poznyakova, is one of these exceptions. According to her, Paustovsky uses associative images, to portray the seasons of the year.¹¹¹ She indicates that the author in explaining the importance of associative images in his prose refers to the following words of Lomonosov (1711–1765): 'There is one important principle to which a writer must adhere; that of association or, as Lomonosov called it, the law of co-imagination.'¹¹² This implies that the association of ideas which an object evokes in a person, who observes it,

¹¹¹ (Розныакова) Познякова, Н. 1972. Путеводная нить воображения: о роли ассоциативности К. Г. Паустовского. *Вопросы Русской Литературой* 1: 68–71.

¹¹² (Paustovsky) Паустовский, К. 1967. *Собрание сочинений в восьми томах*. Т. 3:424. Москва.

continues beyond its immediate presence. Some of these ideas are emotionally and intellectually interlinked with others and enter into the observer's mind in a succession of stages of awareness (ibid.). In Paustovsky's case, the very first link in the chain of connotations associated with the seasons of the year has its origin in his intimate knowledge of them.

Contrary to Poznyakova's in-depth contribution with regard to how the Paustovsky's use of metaphors should be approached, other critics on Paustovsky only briefly mention this aspect. They mostly concentrate on how Paustovsky metaphors evoke the sensory aspects of nature. Davydova and Borodin¹¹³ for example refer to the colours Paustovsky uses to portray the different seasons of the year.

Similar to Poznyakova, ecocritics such as Glotfelty¹¹⁴ and Heise¹¹⁵ point out that an ecocritical analysis of a work in which nature features among others entails being aware of the associations underlying the metaphors of nature. The scholar Rueckert views the associations which a writer establishes when in close contact with nature as mental energy that flows from the desire to express what is observed through language.

For an insight into how Paustovsky's associative mind functions it is necessary to form an understanding of his aesthetic conception of the seasons of the year. In this respect, it is worth noting that, although he attaches specific values to the different seasons, he also appreciates each season solely for its own intrinsic beauty.

Paustovsky uses expressive metaphors to describe the various elements of the seasons of the year and highlights his sensory awareness of them. He concentrates on the sounds

¹¹³ (Borodin) Бородин, И. 1971. К вопросу об истоках поэтической образности лирической прозы. *Вопросы Русской Литературы* 1: 68–71.

¹¹⁴ Glotfelty, C. 1996. Literary studies in an age of environmental crisis. In: *The ecocriticism reader*. Ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. Athens, London.

¹¹⁵ Heise, U. 1997. Science and ecocriticism. *The American Book Review* 18.5 (July–August).

typically associated with each season, for example, those of storms in summer, the continuous drizzling of rain in autumn, and the sounds of the winds in spring. The author also argues that an epithet should be so descriptive that it will long be remembered. A typical characteristic of his descriptive portrayal of the seasons is his ability to use two or three epithets to embellish one word that evokes a particular season. He emphasises the different colours of the sky, the sun, moon, clouds and vegetation, especially the shades and nuances of various colours that are conveyed through original combinations of epithets. Just like a painter uses brushstrokes to express the colours the emotions evoked by the colours typical of the seasons of the year, so does Paustovsky excel in his use of epithets. 'In the heart of Russia' (1950) describes the appearance of a lake in springtime: 'A green, silt shadow lay on the lake, tucked away in the steep banks, and in this shadow, a broom itself silver, sparkled with silvery dew'. When depicting an autumn day in Paris, he writes 'The trees seemed to have been covered in light bronze by some great sculptor. A slate-grey sky stretched overhead, but it was light, a radiant Paris, grey all the same'. What is striking of those epithets is that Paustovsky not only uses several epithets to describe the seasons, but that he contrasts epithets such as 'green, silt shadow', with a broom sparkling with 'silvery dew' (spring) or a 'light, radiant Paris', with a grey autumn.

Ecocritics examine the way in which a writer depicts the seasons of the year. They also assess the role which they play in prose in which nature appears. In his collection of essays *The golden rose* (1964) Paustovsky provides what the reader may experience as an accurate description of spring in Russia. He does not only mention the different phases in which spring appears, but also uses three epithets to portray the manifestation of snow in spring.

The thaws set in, then the snow becomes granular, black and spongy and thereafter its melting makes the roads impassable and holes appear in the ice layers on the rivers. After this, the ice begins to move and float on the surface of the rivers'. (1982, 3: 246–247)

As noted in previous chapters, ecocritics study the way in which the portrayal of nature in a literary work reflects the emotions of people. In this respect, Paustovsky's presentation of spring parallels his portrayal of water. By analogy, in his short stories the emotions of people are also portrayed through the seasons of the year. In 'A rainy dawn' (1945), for example, a man and a woman, who are not a formal couple, find a way of comforting each other. Their relationship changes from apprehension to trust in a way the rain changes from pelting to drizzle. Paustovsky does not offer any indication that their relationship becomes permanent. By evoking his own past, the novelist highlights that there is often a contrast between the light-hearted, boisterous happiness that accompanies the arrival of spring and the suffering of people, in this case, his own family. His presentation of spring parallels his depiction of water.

Paustovsky frequently uses spring to symbolise various events, for example, through the imagery of spring he portrays spring as a spiritual awakening from the suffering brought about by war. Such is the case in a 'Crimean spring' (1945) that conveys the victory of the Russian soldiers over the Germans in the Crimea during the Second World War. Another example is his short story 'The prayer of Madame Bové' (1944) that evokes the landing of the Allied Forces in Normandy bringing not only the liberation of Europe but also victory for Russia and its allies.

What will be of interest to ecocritics is that in several of Paustovsky's short stories unhappiness is conveyed through the imagery of a cold and wet spring. Spring in Russia often means prolonged rainfall which earns it an epithet of 'beastly'. Thus, in contrast to 'A rainy dawn' the short story 'A late spring' (1943) depicts spring as an unwelcome season. The continuous rain and the late, cold spring, is characteristically accompanied by squalls and rain.

'A late spring' is a story about a brigade of Russian soldiers stationed in an Estonian town during the Second World War. At the beginning of spring, in April, the brigade

hears that the Moscow singer, Natalya Samoylova, is coming to town to give a concert for the soldiers. This news is conveyed by Lieutenant Osipov to his fellow officer, Lugovoy, who seems to be upset by it. When Lugovoy sees the wind blowing through the wet pine trees, and drops similar to tears falling from trees, he wants to cry. Nevertheless, he feels that he ought to go to the concert. He decides to sit in the last row where no one will spot him in the candlelight. In the meantime searching for peace of mind, he goes to the sea and observes how the wind pushes green and cloudy waves to the shore, but this image only reinforces his sadness.

When Natalya Samoylova arrives in the town, she is especially pleased with the sound of the sea and the smell of the pine trees. In contrast to Lugovoy's reaction, she experiences joy enhanced by the signs of spring. She becomes even more jubilant when the chambermaid brings her a bunch of hyacinths. The bouquet of the beautiful flowers contrasts the cold, rainy day outside, and mirrors Natalya's pleasure that the flowers give her. Although the next day is the 1st of May, Worker's Day, she expects to be alone whilst everyone else celebrates. However, her presence in town, coinciding with spring means 'clear blue skies' (1983, 6: 356) and perhaps a change of fortune for her. Although direct communist propaganda is absent in this story, the sunny weather predicted for the day symbolises the bright, rosy future in which many Soviet citizens were made to believe. The touch of sun on this day can be seen as a sign of universal justice, the workers are rewarded with good weather.

As it happens, the sunny skies predict also a brighter future for Natalya personally. When Lugovoy and Natalya meet, it becomes obvious that they had a relationship in the past. They embrace, and Natalya promises to stay with him. In this story the early spring imagery parallels Lugovoy's lost of Natalya. As the day warms up they experience 'a late spring' and the rebirth of their love. This story concludes with a romantic image referring to 'the moon shining behind the clouds' (1983, 6: 360). Thus the imagery of a rainy, cold spring with which the story begins, and which corresponds to the emotional turbulence of

two people, gives way to the shining moon, which symbolises a new period, that of their re-discovered love.

This short story is one of the few where Paustovsky uses spring to portray a relationship between a man and a woman that does not end on a note of uncertainty. This relationship is one which after some trouble has a chance to succeed. The title, 'A late spring', suggests that happiness does not always occur immediately, but sometimes it comes much later. It is significant that the soldier and the woman reunite in May which in the northern hemisphere is traditionally considered the season when love awakens.

In the short story 'The overflows of rivers' (1952) spring is not associated with happy events. Instead, it is portrayed as a season incarnating the misery of a failed love. At the centre of the story, which has an aura of a biographically factual account, is the Russian Romantic poet Mikhail Lermontov. The experience of Paustovsky's Lermontov is reminiscent of one of the episodes entitled 'Taman', in Lermontov's own novel *A hero of our times* (1840).

Paustovsky's story begins with a description of Lermontov on a ferry in the Caucasus. It is spring; however the bird cherries are late in blossoming. The flood of the river is so excessive that the ferry is obliged to anchor in a remote village. Lermontov listens with indifference to the complaints of his fellow passengers about the delay. He is concerned with his unreciprocated love for a woman, called Maria. In a way similar to Pechorin, the main protagonist of *Taman*, Lermontov's arrival at a coastal town is not a happy event. Everything in the village appears miserable and unwelcoming. Like Pechorin Paustovsky's Lermontov, too is overtaken by melancholy. He is contemplating death while he remains a romantic seeker of love, who recalls the words of Pushkin: 'and maybe at my sunset love will sadly shine'. These words reflect his hope that he might still experience the simple and wonderful things in life, 'similar to the consolation offered by a mother to her child' (1982, 3: 632). When finally he realises that love is a fleeting

feeling, even though the object of his affection is not far from him, he becomes more aware of the beauty of the landscape in spring. He recalls a bitter poem that he once wrote for Maria. The poem extolled the beauty of 'the nights of the Ukraine, illuminated by permanent stars' and accused Maria of replacing the flowering steppes with the 'tiring splendour of the balls' (1982, 3: 635).

In Paustovsky's prose the encounters between men and women who are mutually attracted are often unexpected. These meetings mostly take place in spring or autumn, the seasons representing transformation. Maria sends a note to Lermontov requesting to meet him. They sit in a garden. She can see that Lermontov is sad and depressed. He avoids admitting to loving her. Instead, he talks about his great love for Russia, saying that it is a love dearer to him than anyone or anything in life. It is clear to Maria that although he might love her, he nevertheless prefers contemplating nature.

Similar to 'A late spring' and 'The overflows of rivers', the short story 'The breeze' (1944) too has as its main theme love. This action takes place near the end of the Second World War. Unlike in 'A late spring' and 'The overflows of rivers', the two main characters are not mentioned by name. The significance of this may be that the relationship between them seems to be a banal event that anyone may experience in the course of their lifetime

The story is introduced with a description of the weather in Moscow during the spring of 1944. It rains the whole day and a cold, gusty wind is blowing, typical for Moscow at the beginning of May. Everything is grey and accentuated by the smoke above the roofs. Only the asphalt on the roads shines 'like a black river' (1983, 6: 320).

During this time, an old doctor living in a big apartment on the banks of the Moscow River receives a visit from a young soldier who was wounded during the siege of Sevastopol. The doctor treated him for a long time and they eventually became friends. During the soldier's visit they talk about the past. As the radio reports that Sevastopol has

been captured by the Russian troops they wait on the balcony for the victory salute. The soldier tells the doctor about his cigarette box which he lost when he was wounded and on which he wrote the name of a woman he loves. This conversation is overheard by a nurse who joins them on the balcony for the salute. She recognises him as one of the former patients and remembers the cigarette box that she still has. She reveals her identity to the soldier through the cigarette box.

Ecocritics will ask what the relevance of spring is in 'The breeze'. It can be assumed that in this story spring symbolises revival and regeneration. Firstly, the soldier experiences an attraction to this woman. He feels buoyant and happy to be with her. This is portrayed by the sense of spring in the air such as well as the 'soft' light of the spring (1983, 6: 360) evoking the personal happiness that the soldier and the nurse are experiencing. Secondly, the walls of the Kremlin look rosy in the early morning mist. This alludes to the rosy future after the victory of the Russians.

Ecocritics not only underpin the role of nature for example the seasons of the year in fiction, but also in other genres for example autobiographical or scientific writing as stressed by the scholar Heise.¹¹⁶ She reasons that ecocriticism is a discipline applicable to various disciplinary fields, such as psychology, history, biology, geography, etc. This is the case with Paustovsky's autobiography. In *Story of a Life* (1964) Paustovsky, explains the significance of spring in his own life. In the chapter called 'The last meeting' (1962),¹¹⁷ he remembers the last time that he ever visited his mother and sister. This visit was made one spring when the author travelled from Tiflis to Kiev. When he arrived in Kiev he was deeply touched by the beauty of the spring, which was at its peak. The chestnut trees were covered in white blossoms and the sun shone brightly on the cupolas of the Vladimir Cathedral. On his way to visit his mother and his nearly blind sister Paustovsky realised that he had last seen them two years ago. On entering their small

¹¹⁶ Heise, U. 1997. Science and ecocriticism. *The American Book Review* 18.5 (July–August).

¹¹⁷ (Paustovsky) Паустовский, К. 1982. *Собрание сочинений*, Т. 5. Москва.

apartment he was shocked by the squalor and dullness of it, and could not help comparing this to the ‘glory’ of the spring scenery outside. His sister told him that they had found a way of living a life without distress. She explained to him that in order to achieve this they painted the walls a bright yellow to evoke the splendour of the spring outside. However for him the colour of the walls did not have that effect. On the contrary it emphasised the poverty of his family. Paustovsky, realising the failure of the experiment of his family to recreate spring, felt that he somehow had to compensate for their misery. In order to do this he left some of his published short stories to his mother.

In ‘A Crimean spring’ (1944)¹¹⁸ Paustovsky reflects the victory of the Russians over the Germans in the Crimea in the spring of 1944. The story begins with a description of the destruction of the Crimean territory by the Germans. For the Russians their sadness was even greater because of its beauty, its appealing sea shores and mild climate, the Crimea, like spring, is considered by them to be a symbol of eternal youth.

[...] великая радость увидеть первую крымскую весну, весну освобождения – туманный и свежий крымский апрель, когда весь Крым цветет [...] И перед этим весенним цветением освобожденной земли бойцы, выйдая к Черному морю, глядя на него, невольно снимут каски и вздохнут всей грудью: ‘Благословенные места! Теперь они навеки наши!’. (1982, 7: 318)

[...] and the great joy to see the first Crimean spring, the spring of liberation – the misty and fresh Crimean April when the whole Crimea blossoms [...] And before this spring blossoming of the liberated territory, the troops leaving for the Black Sea, and when looking at it, involuntarily taking off their helmets and sighing with their whole chests: ‘Blessed places! Now they are forever ours’.

¹¹⁸ (Paustovsky) Паустовский, К. 1983. *Собрание сочинений*, Т. 7. Москва.

The ecocritical analysis of Paustovsky's prose encourages one to see the role of spring in his writing as a metaphor for personal happiness or victory at a time of war. However, since, in the Northern Hemisphere the resurrection of Christ falls in spring, it is also associated with religious beliefs. The act of resurrection is usually depicted by the season's explosion of bright greens and the general revival of nature. Dead trees and plants become alive again symbolising hope and revival.

'The prayer of Madame Bové' (1944), highlights such religious connotations associated with spring. Madame Bové, a French woman from Normandy who serves as governess for a Russian family during the Second World War, is saddened by the German occupation of France and one of the two sisters who are in her care, tells that 'she has no France anymore'. Madame says that it will only be reborn 'once the lilacs flower again' (1983, 6: 344–345). The lilac is associated with beauty, pride, the innocence of youth and general revival. During the spring of 1944 Madame Bové decides to go to a church in a neighbouring town. The church that she visits is decorated with birch tree twigs, another symbol of new life and resurrection. She wonders when her motherland will be freed.

In her heart Madame Bové prays with the priest for the restoration of peace, which she equates with the abundance of fruit. This symbolises the prosperity of people when there is no war and killing. After the service she hears the news that the Allied Forces have landed in Normandy and have begun the process of liberating Europe, known in history as D-day, namely 6 June 1944. Madame organises a little feast for the family and sings 'the lilacs flowered again' investing in it sign of spring and the hope for the restoration of peace.

Paustovsky's representation of autumn also merits special attention because it contains several elements analysed by ecocritics in literature where nature features: how the writer conveys the different dimensions of autumn, the influence of autumn on the psyche of

people, in particular on himself, autumn as an inspiration of creative processes and autumn as a vehicle to convey certain ecological truths.

Similar to his descriptions of the various stages of spring, Paustovsky's portrayal of autumn in the collection of essays *The golden rose* merits attention. The beginning of autumn is depicted as a transitional period from summer to winter. One of the essays in this collection, 'A dictionary of nature', highlights the precise use of words portraying autumn. For example, he uses a verb *сентябрить*, *to September*, which is a neologism used by the local people of the Meshchora region to indicate the onset of autumn which in Russia usually arrives in September. It is a fitting word describing this season when, the colours of the earth begin to fade. However the presence of an Indian summer and warm summer days are still felt. To him this period has similar characteristics to those of a mature woman. There is still some heat in her, however, a first coldness has set in. The leaves of the birch trees turn yellow. The leaves of these trees are compared to a group of young girls carrying handkerchiefs embroidered with golden thread. Unfortunately in Russia the Indian summer does not last long and is followed by foul rains and a cold northern wind.

In the short story 'The yellow light' (1936) a first person narrator describes an autumn which made a distinct impression on him. Whereas the arrival of autumn is normally a gradual process, this autumn appeared from the one day to the next without any notice. He tells how he experienced it:

Я проснулся серым утром. Комната была залита ровным желтым светом, будто от керосиновой лампы [...]

Странный свет – неяркий и неподвижный – был непохож на солнечный. Это светили осенние листья. За ветреную и долгую ночь сад сбросил сухую листву, она лежала шумными грудями на земле и распространяла тусклое сияние. От этого

сияния лица людей казались загорелыми, а страницы книг на столе как будто покрылись слоем воска. (1983, 6: 156)

I awoke one grey morning. The room was flooded with an even light, like that of a paraffin lamp [...]

This was a strange light – dull and motionless – it was not similar to that of the sun. During the windy and long night the garden dropped dry leaves. They lie in noisy heaps on the ground and spread a dim radiance. Due to this radiance the faces of the people seemed to be tanned and the pages of the books on the table as if covered with a layer of wax.

When reading the signs of the onset of autumn in ‘The yellow light’ the reader has the impression that he is entering a muted, twilight world where time has no meaning and where every element seems to be benevolent, inspiring people with a sensation of happiness. The narrator is touched by every unexpected smile, even by the sounding horn of a faraway boat, as the sudden arrival of autumn takes ‘complete possession’ (1983, 6: 156) of the whole earth, its gardens, rivers, forests and air. He is fascinated by the behaviour of small animals such as mice, the blue tits and birds. The tits bustle in the garden, their cries similar to that of broken glass. They hang upside down on the branches and stare at the window from under the leaves of a maple tree.

Every morning the birds of passage gather in the garden as if they are on an island. They whistle, screech and chirp. It only becomes quiet later in the day when they leave for the south. Their departure is followed by the trees losing their leaves which fall day and night and are then blown to the damp grass. The atmosphere becomes more sombre and the rainy season sets in.

An old fisherman called Prokhor, explains the origin of autumn to the author. A very long time ago the blacksmiths decided to use their skill to make guns. Then a simpleton,

observing birds flying in the sky fired a shot at them. As a result, the golden fluff of the birds fell to the earth and blood spilled on the leaves. From that time onwards autumn followed after summer. It became a season during which the green summer leaves lose their lustre and take on a yellow colour and the dim colour of blood. In contrast to the green summer leaves symbolising life, the yellow and red colours are the sign of the fading of life which finally results in death when most trees lose their leaves.

In a *Tale of woods* and the collection of essays *The golden rose* Paustovsky shows how the forests and water resources of Russia give rise to artistic creation. He also attributes this role to autumn. The author admits that he shares Pushkin's belief that autumn stimulates creative capacity. In *The Golden Rose* he refers to Pushkin, finding his words to be applicable to his own writing: 'Autumn is approaching' [Pushkin wrote to Pletnev]. This is my favourite season of the year – my health usually strengthens, it is the time when my literary work begins'. Pushkin's words refer to the onset of autumn and consecutive autumns he spent in Boldino during which he wrote his masterpiece, *Evgeniy Onegin* (1830).

To Paustovsky autumn is not only a period of inspiration to writers, but all artists. The plot of his short story, 'Watercolours' (1936) develops around the return to Russia of the nature painter Berg that coincides with the onset of autumn. Berg had been to France to improve his painting skills and now the Russian scenery no longer inspires him. This creative impasse lasts until he visits Yartsev, a fellow painter, in the Vladimir region, in Central Russia. One sunny autumn day while walking in the forests, Berg comes across a beautiful display of light, which results in his renewed appreciation of the Russian nature.

[...] На следующий день Берг проснулся от солнца. Дождя не было. Легкие тени ветвей дрожали [...] а за дверью сияла тихая синева.

Слова ‘сияние’ Берг встречал только в книгах поэтов, считал его выпреним и лишенным ясного смысла. Но теперь он понял, как точно это слово передает тот особый свет, какой исходит от сентябрьского неба и солнца. (1983, 6: 172)

[...]The next day the sun woke Berg. There was no rain. The light shadows of the branches trembled [...] behind the door a soft blue colour shone.

Berg had only encountered the word ‘radiance’ in the books of poets and considered it as bombastic and devoid of any clear meaning. However, now he understood how precisely this word reproduces this special colour, that comes from the September sky and sun.

After his encounter with the beauty of the Russian autumn Berg once again begins to paint, creating landscapes reflecting the intense colours typical of autumn in his native country.

There might be yet another area of Pautovsky’s prose that would spark the interest of ecocritics, who study the influence of nature on the psyche of an elderly person. Towards the end of his life Paustovsky’s description of autumn echoes his state of mind at that time. Although he appreciated the achievements of Russian prose writers he was no more inclined to equate artistic greatness to the perfection of nature.

In his autobiographical story ‘Alone with autumn’ (1963), written five years before his death, the author describes an experience he had during a warm, dry autumn. The yellowing of the birch tree groves has been long delayed. He is on a boat on the Oka River which is covered in a blue haze. Through the mist he sees old willow trees and ‘emerald crops’ (1983, 6: 576–577). The colour emerald embodies the beauty of maturity.¹¹⁹ Suddenly a sound resembling the ringing glass fills the air. It is a flock of cranes flying to the sunny south.

¹¹⁹ Chevalier, J. Gheerbrant, A. 1982. A. *Dictionnaire des symboles*. Paris.

A few days after this trip on the Oka Paustovsky, was asked by a Moscow newspaper to write an article on what he considered to be a masterpiece in literature. Thinking about his recent experience on the Oka River, he came to the conclusion that one should not only view literary works as masterpieces but should also be aware of the masterpieces that occur in nature, in particular, in the manifestations of autumn:

Да что говорить! Каждый осенний лист был шедевром, тончайшим слитком из золота и бронзы, обрызганным киноварью и чернью аждый лист был совершенным творением природы, произведением ее таинственного искусства, недоступного нам, людям. Этим искусством уверенно владела только она, только природа, равнодушная к нашим восторгам и похвалам. (1983, 6: 576)

Yes, what to say! Each autumn leaf was a treasure, with the thinnest bar of gold and bronze, sprinkled with vermillion and black enamel.

Each leaf was a perfect creation of nature, a production of its secret art, inaccessible to us. This art is mastered by her only, nature, remaining indifferent to our delight and praise.

A theme that appears like a leitmotiv in Paustovsky's prose, and which is akin to the one argued by the ecologists of the 21st century, is that people often believe that they can change the laws of nature to suit their own purposes. *Colchis* for example describes how the inhabitants of the region try to change the balance of their natural surroundings and in *A tale of woods* he shows how the negligence of forests causes havoc in the course of the seasons of the year.

This topic also reverberates in 'The gift' (1940). The story begins with the observation that each year people will inevitably remark that they cannot compare the current season to the way in which it manifested itself during the previous year. Winter, for example,

seems to drag on for longer periods than usual, and summer becomes much shorter. This signifies that nature does not always conform to what people expect from it and that the seasons of the year do not necessarily arrive at the expected time or last as people would want them to last.

Каждый раз, когда приближалась осень, начинались разговоры о том, что многое в природе устроено не так, как нам бы хотелось. Зима у нас длинная, затяжная, лето гораздо короче зимы, а осень проходит мгновенно и оставляет впечатление промелькнувшей за окном золотой птицы. (1983, 6: 257)

Each time when autumn drew nearer, talks began about the fact that many things in nature were arranged not as we would have liked them to be. Our winter is long, dragged out, summer much shorter, but autumn passes instantly and gives the impression that a golden bird flew past behind the window.

In order to illustrate the inevitable rhythm of the passing of seasons Paustovsky tells of a visit by Vanya, the fifteen-year old grandson of a forest warder, who frequented their cottage where he was staying in the Meshchora region with Ruvim. The purpose of Vanya's visits to the writers was to read old copies of the magazine *All around the world*. However, Paustovsky thought that it was not the only aim of his visit, but to listen to their conversations (1983, 6: 257).

One that visit Vanya brought a small birch tree covered in a newspaper. He explained that he wanted to see how long a birch tree could retain its autumnal appearance in a warm room. While the birch trees in the garden were shedding their leaves the little tree retained its leaves. Initially the experiment seemed to show that people can prolong autumn for as long as they wanted. One morning, however, when Paustovsky entered the room he saw that the tree had lost all its leaves during the night as if 'in sympathy with his brothers outside' (1983, 6: 258). An ecocritical reading encourages one to consider

this experiment as an indication that nature keeps its own balance, and there is no way that people can interfere with its cycles.

Another observation derived from an ecocritical reading is that the seasons of the year also symbolise the different phases in a person's life: birth, childhood, youth, and finally old age and death. In 'The Ilynsky Waters' (1964) Paustovsky refers to his own ageing in terms of the seasons of the year.

In a way similar to autumn Paustovsky often portrays summer as period of spiritual instability and as a season when the first signs of ageing and even death are already present. The white nights of the summer in the northern region of Russia are for example portrayed as one of sadness. This is conveyed in the author's essays in *The golden rose* in which he advances the view that people can rarely reconcile themselves with the inevitable disappearance of the charm of the white nights, i.e. with that of summer. These nights are a reminder that, like the fragile precarious light of the white nights, happiness is precious and must be treasured, because it is often of a fleeing nature. (1982, 3: 275–276).

Similar to his depiction of the sadness that people often experience during the short northern summer, Paustovsky's autobiographical essay *The Ilynsky Waters* (1964) pursues the theme of the inevitable passing of time and the temporality of people's existence on earth. Summer in this essay, symbolises the process of human ageing and of death itself. The author contends that the signs of the deterioration of human life are already present in summer, notwithstanding the fact that people inevitably associate it with the joys of youth and during this period prefer to ignore any sign of ageing. His conviction is that although they are in their prime, their youth will soon pass. The reason for this is that the lives of people follow the same course as that of the seasons of the year. Even in the early stages of ageing it becomes clear that everything a person dreams of doing in a lifetime, such as visiting new places, might never be accomplished:

Самое сильное сожаление вызывает у нас чрезмерная и ничем не оправданная стремительность времени. Действительно, не успеешь оглянуться, как уже вянет лето – то ‘невозвратное’ лето, которое почти у всех людей связано с воспоминаниями детства.

Не успеешь опомниться, как уже блекнет молодость и тускнеют глаза. А между тем ты еще не увидел и сотой доли того очарования, какое жизнь разбросала вокруг. (1983, 6: 584)

Time rushes past with such unjustifiable haste that this must be our greatest regret of all. Before you know where you are, summer is fading, that ‘irretrievable’ summer which is associated in nearly everyone’s mind with memories of childhood.

In a flash youth has passed, old age is creeping on and you have still not seen the tiniest fraction of the enchantment that life has cast around you. (1986: 353)

The same stories frequently depict the violent aspects of summer in other regions of Russia, such as the Meshchora region. In ‘The old boat’ (1939) for example, he describes a typical summer storm. The storm is preceded by rolling thunder, which changes the atmosphere of the countryside from a tranquil, welcoming landscape into a threatening one.

Гром громыхнул за краем земли и неуклюже покатился над лесом. Гром ворчал так долго, что казалось, он обегает кругом всю огромную землю. Он затихал, когда запутывался в чаще, но, выбравшись на просеки и поляны, гремел еще угрюмее, чем раньше. (1983, 6: 225-226)

Thunder boomed at the end of the earth and rolled clumsily over the forest. It rumbled for so long that it seemed to be travelling all the way around the vast land, dying

down when absorbed by a grove, when it broke out into fire lanes and glades, growling even more grimly than before.

This story conveys the harsh sounds of the storm by repeatedly using the hard Russian sound г – g which is similar to the /g/ sound in ‘good’, *громыхнул, гром, бегаает, кругом, огромную, когда* and *зрел*. The reader can literally ‘hear’ the sound of the rolling thunder. The word *гром* (thunder) is in itself a short, strong expressive word, reflecting the violence of a severe storm. This storm alters the country side from a tranquil, making it a threatening one. Fire has always been associated with destruction and even with hell, as suggested by the image of ‘the fire lanes and glades’.

A theme that regularly appears in Paustovsky’s prose is the establishment of conditions where people can escape from pollution in cities and live in a way that would promote their physical and spiritual well-being. In his short story ‘A Moscow summer’ (1931) an architect Hoffman, an idealistic dreamer, has a futuristic idea of how the problem of pollution can be solved by building cylindrical round glass houses in which there would be eternal summer and permanent fresh air. It is important to note that in a circular shape there is no division, no beginning and no escape, thus total perfection and communication with nature, for example hearing the sounds of nature in the house as if they were outside. He calls his experimental project ‘The Fifth Day’.

Hoffman invites some of his friends to hear their opinion on the house he is building. The first person to comment on Hoffman’s project is Mett, a journalist who came on the trip to write an article about the house. Although Mett appreciates the stars and snowy branches that could be seen through the glass walls, he becomes restless because it is too silent. He then decides to play the piano and to sing at full voice. However, when the noise of wind penetrates the house, he becomes irritated. It seems as if Mett does not appreciate Hoffman’s idea that people of a house, where there is no barriers between people and their natural surroundings.

Hoffman explains to Mett that his house is a medium for people in which to flourish and feel protected, like a shell to a tortoise or a snail. He says that as a true socialist man he came to the realisation that cities outlived their time and that they have been created by human limitations due to the inability to properly use raw materials. He wants to improve on the effort of his Soviet co-citizens to create an environment where there would be no pollution and where they would feel in harmony with nature.

Another journalist, who is not impressed with Hoffman's house, is Danilov. He reasons that the house is too perfect and clinical. According to him each house has to have a certain amount of useless objects and must at least have one mistake. A mistake is a sign of life, 'infallibility is death'. According to him Hoffman's house is 'dead'.

After a short visit to Hoffman's house his guests return to Moscow. They are met by the atmosphere of the typical industrial environment.

От станций, от паровозов, от вагонов валил густой пар. Отчаянно кричали вороны. Махорочные, душные, обветренные поезда шли к Москве, продышавшей, как лесной зверь, темное пятно среди глухих и глубоких снегов. От Москвы тоже валил дым и пар, но Московский дым был ... величав. Это был как бы дым истории, революций, дым вечности. (1983, 6: 96).

Dense steam poured from the stations, the engines and the carriages. The rooks cawed desperately. The smoky, stuffy, weather-beaten trains ran to Moscow which like a beast of the forests had breathed a dark patch in the deep hollow snows. Smoke and steam were also bellowing from Moscow, but the Moscow smoke was ... majestic. It was as if there was the smoke of history, or revolutions, the smoke of eternity. (1986: 46).

The scene that Hoffman's friends encounter when they arrive in Moscow has nothing in common with the pure air in 'The Fifth Day'. The train in which they travel, is depicted as a 'beast of the forests' (1983, 6: 96), spreading pollution as far as it goes. Despite this, Hoffman's friends feel that their experience in his house with its ecologically pure

environment was not worthwhile. They are more attracted to the familiar 'smoky, stuffy, weather-beaten trains' (1986: 46) than to the experimental house. They see the train and its smoke as a necessary component in Russia's progress to an industrialised society. Similar to Hoffman's friends, the Construction Committee of Moscow also rejects Hoffman's endeavour due to its disfunctionality and high consumption of building materials

It becomes clear that Hoffman's experiment cannot replace the reality of the pollution in Moscow. The factory worker Luzgin, was one of the members of the expedition to the 'Fifth Day', feels that his experience in the house cannot be equalled by his happiness to be back at the factory where he works. He is in awe of the burners in the factory and the stars emanating from the flames. The sight of the activity in the factory is more 'picturesque' to him than anything he knows.

From an ecocritical viewpoint 'A Moscow summer' is important. Analysing the role of nature in this story, ecocritics would stress that although Hoffman tried to create a situation where nature and people are in a symbiotic relationship beneficial to both, his endeavour is a failure. The reason for this is that the political climate in Russia in the 1920s influenced people's view with regard to nature. Although Hoffman in the spirit of the Soviet era might have tried to create the ideal circumstances for people and nature to communicate, they still preferred life in a polluted Moscow, because it symbolised the industrialisation process of the Soviet Union and by extension its 'greatness'.

When Hoffman returns to Moscow in summer he comes to the sad realisation that despite the oppressive heat and the dirt in the city, people are happy here and do not wish to live in another way. At Kamenny Bridge old men spit in the already dirty green water. The neglect by Russians of their natural environment is equally underscored in Paustovsky's essay 'For the beauty of the mother land' (1955) written nearly thirty years after 'A

Moscow summer' and which addresses the uncaring attitude towards ecology by the Russian authorities as well as the lack of concern felt by ordinary citizens.

Winter does not feature as prominently in Paustovsky's prose as the other seasons of the year. However, his short story, 'Snow' (1943) is considered internationally to be one of the writer's best works.¹²⁰ The acclaim that this story received is attributed to the description of the atmosphere that prevailed in Russia during the Second World War, and, in particular, how this war touched the lives of individuals.

In 'Snow' Paustovsky tells the story of Tatyana Petrovna, and her daughter, Varya, who are evacuated to the house of an old man, Potapov, who dies shortly after their arrival in 1942. Initially Tatyana is very unhappy about this move. However she adapts to living in the small town. She begins to appreciate the birch grove beyond the house and the comfortable atmosphere in the dwelling as well as the piano with its candles and the yellow photographs of battleships. She knows that Potapov has a son who serves in the Black Sea Fleet. Potapov's son does not know that his father has died and therefore regularly continues to send letters to him. One day Tatyana cannot resist reading one of the son's letters addressed to his father. When reading Nikolay's letter, she is deeply touched by his reminiscence of winter in the region, the little house and town where he grew up. It all seems so far away from him in the hospital where he is recuperating. He writes the following to his father:

‘Я часто вспоминаю тебя, папа, и наш дом, и наш городок. Все это страшно далеко, как будто на краю света ... В комнатах трещат печи. Пахнет березовым дымом ... Звонит ли колокольчик у дверей? ...Эх, если бы ты знал, как я полюбил все это отсюда, издали! Ты не удивляйся, но я говорю тебе совершенно серьезно: я вспоминал об этом в самые страшные минуты боя. Я знал, что защищаю не только

¹²⁰ (Henry), Генри, П. 1992. 'Повесть о жизни'. *Журнал Художественной Литературы*, 3: 45–50.

всю страну, но и вот этот ее маленький и самый милый для меня уголок – и тебя, ... и березовые рощи за рекой. (1983, 6: 297).

‘I often think of you, papa and our house and our little town. It all seems far, far away, at the other end of the world... Inside the house the stoves are crackling. There is the smell of birch wood smoke ... Does the doorbell work? ... If you only know how I have grown to love this from afar! Don’t be surprised when I tell you in all seriousness that I used to recall it during the most difficult moments of battle. I knew that I was defending not only my country, but also that little corner of it, dearest to my heart – and you, ... the birch groves beyond the river ... (1986: 219).

‘Snow’ reflects a theme that frequently appears in Russian literature written during the Second World War, namely the idealisation of the countryside and the Russian landscape, which was considered a sign of patriotism, but also was closely linked to the idea of home. Like many others, Nikolay was defending not only Russia during the Second World War, but everything that was dear to him including his father, their garden, their village and the birch groves beyond the river.

When Tatyana learns that Nikolay is returning home for a visit she tries to restore this ‘corner’ in such a way that Nikolay could once again find comfort in it. His arrival coincides with the soft grey sky in the deepening twilight and slight falling snow which fill him with peace and tranquillity. This feeling is reinforced when Tatyana takes Nikolay to his father’s grave beyond the birch grove. The birch trees cast soft shadows upon the snow. It is through the image of the whiteness, softness and purity of the snow that Paustovsky conveys the happiness of Nikolay. Despite his initial resentment, he feels that Tatyana is now his family. A full circle has been completed: firstly, the happiness of youth, then the suffering of war, the loss of a father and now an inner peace which he never expected to regain.

To conclude Paustovsky's portrayal of winter, one may say that he does not only consider autumn as a season during which a person's creative urge is strong, but also occasionally attributes this role to winter. 'The birth of a short story' (1954) depicts the depression of a writer, Muravev, who has for a long time been unable to write anything as he lacks the necessary inspiration. Muravev feels that his days of creative writing are over. He believes that he needs some rest and visits the dacha of friends. When he arrives at the dacha, he realises that *zimka* has set in, a term used by Russians to indicate the end of winter when the snow begins to melt.

When he sees the snow flutters in the wind, he admires the 'splendid' design of the snow crystal and thinks that if a person who would have invented the form of such crystals he would merit great glory. However he realises that nothing is more fleeting and fragile than these crystals. The sigh of one child would be sufficient to destroy them. The sight of the fragile snow crystals dispels Muravev's depression and he is ready to write again. It can be assumed that after having witnessed the beauty of the snow he regained his creative ability.

To sum up it may be concluded that the seasons of the year play a major role in Paustovsky's writing. They reflect the inner emotions of his protagonists, especially those of people involved in a relationship as in the short stories 'A late spring', 'The breeze' and 'The overflows of rivers'.

Furthermore, the universal human values such as love for the natural surroundings of one's country, religious beliefs and personal happiness are based on a pivotal ecocritical principle, namely that the seasons of the year are not passive. The ecocritic Manes, for example, reasons that nature has a 'voice' and communicates with people. It is in particular the seasons of the year that influence the psyche of people and the way they feel about themselves and the world. The seasons are articulate and communicate with

humans and help them to define who they really are.¹²¹ This, for example, is the case in ‘Snow’ where winter reflects the themes of regaining the lost happiness of youth. An important topic in Paustovsky’s prose is that literary works and paintings reflect the intimate communication between people and the seasons. They mirror the dynamism of the seasons of the year, such as the re-emergence of energy in spring, its fulfilment in summer, maturity in autumn, old age and finally death; only to be renewed once again in the cycle of life.

Paustovsky’s portrayal of the seasons of the year illustrates how the seasons of the year promotes artistic creation, and influence artistic creation. The seasons also reflect human emotions. Finally the author conveys ecological aspects through the seasons of the year. ‘A Moscow summer’ presents the failed effort of an architect to create permanent summer in a glass house. ‘The gift’ is a story which in a subtle way emphasises that the seasons of the year are fixed and that nature as well as people have to submit to the cycle of nature and accept the passing of time. The philosophy underlying this story is that there is a time for joy and there is a time for sadness and there is a time for autumn and winter. In this context the seasons of the year assume the metaphoric significance of the cycle of life as they represent youth, adulthood, maturity and old age.

¹²¹ Manes, C. Nature and silence. In: *The ecocriticism reader*. Ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press.

CHAPTER FIVE

FAUNA AND FLORA IN PAUSTOVSKY'S PROSE

The reader might question when reading the title of this chapter why the imagery of animals and plants in Paustovsky's prose is analysed under the same title. The reason for this is that the writer attributes more or less the same values to them. Ecocritics studying Paustovsky's prose will undoubtedly ask what role animals and plants play in his prose. Firstly, he focuses on fauna and flora for the sake of their aesthetic value. Secondly, it should be noted that he also encourages a thorough research of their scientific properties. Thirdly, he shows that people and the fauna and flora are interconnected and that they constitute an indivisible whole consisting of several interrelated elements. Fourthly, it is through his depiction of the animals and plants of Russia that Paustovsky familiarises the reader with several dimensions of Russian culture, such as its links with superstition, the ritual of fishing and the important role of folk medicine. Last but not the least is his depiction of the fauna and flora of the country in relation to his profound attachment to a region in the central part of Russia, the Meshchora region.

Paustovsky attaches certain values to the fauna and flora of Russia. On the one hand, it could be said that he is of the opinion that their wellbeing on earth is a value in itself, because it ensures the survival of the planet. On the other hand, he imputes human values to the fauna and flora particular to animals. Notwithstanding the fact that trees constitute an integral part of the floral system of Russia they are not mentioned in this chapter because trees in the form of forests are discussed in Chapter Two.

Although literary critics in general do not view the presentation of the fauna and flora in Paustovsky's prose through an ecocritical lens, they frequently mention that one of the main themes of his prose is the close interaction between the Russian people and the flora

of their country. Chistyakova draws attention to the fact that the flora imagery in his prose serves as background for the actions of his protagonists, and that its portrayal is often closely linked to the main plot of his stories.¹²² Henry, a British scholar with a particular interest in Paustovsky's prose, notes that, during the Cold War, when the first translations of Paustovsky's prose reached the British Isles, the readers discovered that the main theme of his prose was not the communist ideology, but, among others, precise observations of the plant life in Russia.¹²³ They were especially impressed by the way in which the author used the imagery of fauna and flora as background to the various actions and the psychological make-up of his protagonists.

When commenting on Paustovsky's prose, scholars often refer to the symbolism of flowers. Poznyakova, for example, refers to a visit of the author to Rome, where he sees beautiful daisies, peonies and carnations on the Navona Square, and realises that the sight of these flowers such as peonies and daisies connects him with the essence of rural Russia.¹²⁴ Eterley praises Paustovsky's description of flowers in a short story 'The old cook' (1940), in which the author compares the subtlety and purity of Mozart's music to white snow, which, in turn, resembles the blossoms of an apple tree.¹²⁵

As far as could be ascertained no literary critic mentions Paustovsky's depiction of animal life in Russia. However, this aspect of his writing is important, especially taking into account the prominence of the subject among ecocritics who are concerned with issues such as whether an animal is tame or wild, whether it is neglected or healthy, and what its natural environment is. Both domestic and wild animals play a prominent role in Paustovsky's prose. He depicts domestic animals, for example, cats, dogs, horses and

¹²² (Chistyakova) Чистякова, И. 1986. Пейзажная живопись К. Паустовского. *Русская Речь* 5:81–86.

¹²³ (Henry) Генри, П. 1992. 'Повесть о жизни'. Журнал Литературное Обозрение 3: 45–50.

¹²⁴ (Poznyakova) Познякова, Н. 1981. Особенности сюжета новелл К. Паустовского, *Zeitschrift für Slawistik* 4: 89–495.

¹²⁵ (Eterley) Этерлей, Е. 1982. К 90–летию К. Г. Паустовского 'Золотой отблеск'. *Русская Речь* 5: 52–58 .

chickens, as well as wild animals such as birds, fish, hares and frogs. Finally, he highlights the cultural values that Russians attach to animals.

As pointed out on several occasions, although Paustovsky was not familiar with ecocriticism, his prose reflects a number of elements that are central to this discipline. Firstly, he demonstrates a profound knowledge of domestic animals. This knowledge has its origin in his close relationship with them. Although he deems an analysis of their behaviour from a scientific angle important, he also relies on his instinctive comprehension of the traits of domestic animals, which he sees in many ways as similar to those of people. Secondly, an analysis of the way in which the author depicts animals, shows that he adheres to a bio-centric view of nature. He does not place animals on a different level than humans, but considers humans and animals to be equal partners in nature.

The author dedicates several short stories to cats and dogs traits. There is a sense that he has a deep understanding of them as for example indicated in his short stories 'The inhabitants of the old house'(1940), 'The stealing cat'(1936) and 'Travelling conversations' (1943).

The story, 'The inhabitants of the old house' (1940)¹²⁶ portrays the instinctive dislike between cats and dogs. It describes how the narrator and his friend spent a summer in an old country house. With them is their dog, Funtik, who eventually disturbs their holiday peace, as well as the peace of the animals on the property. On the first day, when Funtik met the cat Stepan, the cat was enjoying one of his greatest pleasures, that of sitting outside and washing himself. The story depicts the emotions of the cat so realistically that the reader can clearly visualise the cat's behaviour. He stretched out his paw then wiped it behind his ear. When Stepan saw Funtik intruding on his space he froze and his eyes

¹²⁶ Paustovsky, K. 1983. *Собрание сочинений*, Т. 6. Москва.

turned white with fury. Funtik, on the contrary, enjoyed the encounter. He was intrigued by this enigmatic creature. The cat immediately considered the dog his arch enemy. He chose his moment, and hit Funtik on his out-turned ear. War was declared by Stepan, although Funtik had mistakenly thought that he had found a friend. After this episode Stepan became dejected and his life became a misery.

In this story, the author explores Stepan's human-like characteristics, such as jealousy and a haughty, proprietary attitude, which he had come to know because the cat shared his life. By extension, it is also a story about misunderstood intentions. 'The inhabitants of the old house' explores the parallels between humans, dogs and cats such as their instinctive behaviour towards and acceptance of one another. The story also is an example of humour in Paustovsky's portrayal of these relationships. In modern times he would probably have been called an 'animal behaviourist', namely a person with a good understanding of the 'psychology' of animals.

Another story that displays Paustovsky's understanding of the behaviour and 'soul' of cats is 'The stealing cat'. During one of his numerous visits to Central Russia with his friend, Ruvim, Paustovsky admits that his patience and nerves were tested by an arrogant rusty-coloured cat that mastered the art of stealing food from the house where they lived. He stole everything he could, including fish, soup, fish tails, cream, bread, sausages, and even went so far as to steal a tin of fish bait. The stealing took place at night. The story portrays the cat as a devious, crafty animal. One day the cat stole a sausage and ran up a birch tree with it. Finally, the men decided that the cat should be taught a lesson. They shook the tree and the cat had to drop the loot. The cat looked down at them with wild eyes and a threatening attitude, but eventually he jumped from the tree and landed on the ground. Defeated, he took refuge in the garden, and then ran to the cellar of the house, where the trapdoor imprisoned him.

Lyonka, the son of the local shoemaker, succeeded in freeing the cat from the cellar. He believed that the cat probably had this personality since birth. As a solution he proposed that it would be better to feed the cat, than to deny him food. His advice was followed and the cat received his favourite foods: pork, perch and cream. Even though he kept pretence of being angry, the cat stopped stealing the food, and, perhaps as a 'sign of gratitude', chased the chicken that tried to grab some food. The cat evidently now saw it as his 'duty' to maintain order in his environment. As in 'The inhabitants of the old house', the author describes the cat with humour, which is achieved through attributing human characteristics to it. On reading this story the conclusion could be reached that a peaceful cohabitation between domestic animals and people where one depends on and respects the other, is possible.

In 'The stealing cat' Paustovsky concentrates on the character of cats, in particular their instinctive territorial behaviour. This is of interest to ecocritics who study the way in which animals, such as, domestic animals, react to their direct environment. The ecocritic, McDowell, emphasises that all entities in the great web of nature deserve recognition and a 'voice'.¹²⁷ This story is yet another proof that a bio-centric approach allows for a harmonious co-existence between people and animals. Although the cat personalities in Paustovsky's short stories cannot talk on a literal level, he portrays them as being able to communicate with people by the way of their actions and behaviour.

Paustovsky's prose equally demonstrates a good understanding of the character of dogs. At the centre of the story 'The rubber dingy' (1936) is an adventure with an inflatable dinghy for fishing. Ruvium however, had inkling that something would spoil their trip and he was proven right when they took the dingy to a village. When they wanted to try it out for the first time, a small dog called Murzik saw the dingy and decided to investigate this 'strange animal'. He began by barking and with his continuous barking worked on

¹²⁷ McDowell, M. 1996. The Bakhtinian road to ecological insight. In: *The ecocriticism reader*. Ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. Athens, London.

everyone's nerves. The cat Stepan that featured in 'The inhabitants of the old house' listened to Murzik's barking and looked at the puppy with contempt. Here too Paustovsky portrays the cat as having a strong personality and maintaining superiority over all other animals that crossed his path. Eventually Murzik jumped into the dingy and began to chew its rubber valve. This caused air to rush out and hitting him. The dog, sensing that he had done something wrong, tried to apologise to his owners by 'sweeping up some dust' when he saw them. So, when they embarked on a trip of a few days to Lake Glukhoe, they decided to leave the dog behind. However, on the third last day of their trip the dog reappeared, whimpering with joy and licking their noses. Murzik did not stop crying. They realised that it must have been a terrible ordeal for the puppy to run all this way through the forests, hearing the strange noises such as the hooting of owls and the howling of wolves. They decided to forgive Murzik because they understood that he was a puppy wanting to play. His intentions were not malicious and in the end he displayed characteristics typical of dogs, such as curiosity, companionship and loyalty.

Stories like the one about Murzik or Stepan show that a real and significant interaction between people and animals is possible. This idea is present in ecocriticism as can be seen in the writings by Manes (1996), who maintains that nature is not a silent entity and that people should learn the 'language' of nature to be able to communicate with it.

Another short story in which the typical characteristics of dogs are conveyed is 'Travelling conversations' (1943). The topic of this story is dogs' loyalty to people as well as their instinctive awareness of imminent danger. A first-person narrator describes a trip on a local train in Central Russia. Among the passengers was a soldier Vanya on his way to the front during the Second World War. It was then discovered that his dog, Dymok, was on the train, and that he must have run many kilometres in order to be united with his master. The conductress told Vanya that the dog must immediately be removed from the train. One of the passengers objected to this, saying that under the circumstances of a soldier going to war it should be allowed for a dog to accompany this owner. The

ensuing discussion was about dogs being aware of everything that was happening in their immediate surroundings, including the dangers of war. Dogs instinctively knew when an approaching aircraft was that of an enemy. Despite the threats from the conductress, passengers insisted on keeping the dog in the train while one of them offered to take Dymok back to Vanya's hometown.

There are several elements in 'Travelling conversations' that are of interest to ecocritics. Firstly, the story stresses the fact that domestic animals, such as dogs, can detect threats and warn their owners about imminent danger, in this case the sound of low flying German aircrafts. Secondly, the story places the conductress as a member of the state bureaucracy. Insisting that Dymok be removed from the train, she exposes herself as a person who lives solely in terms of the principles dictated by the railway code. By contrast, the friendly and down-to-earth Russians in the train are simple, animal-loving people. They feel sorry for Vanya and appreciate the dog's love and attachment to his master. In their view, the man-dog bond and dog's loyalty must be respected and rewarded. This story thus illustrates one of the basic principles of ecocriticism, namely that people and animals, in particular domestic animals, can live harmoniously together if there is a complete trust and interdependence between them. It also shows that animals have to be respected, because they show feelings, temper and have a will.

The story 'The old man in the station buffet' (1964)¹²⁸ merits being analysed from an ecocritical perspective too. The story tells about a small dog and his poor, elderly owner who on a very cold morning entered a buffet in a railway station, not to eat something, but just to get warm. However the dog could not contain himself when he saw some young people having a meal. He started to beg from the young people. One of them asked the old man why he did not take proper care of his dog. Then another man offered the dog a piece of sausage. The old man forbade the dog to take the sausage and he guiltily

¹²⁸ Паустовский, К. 1982. *Собрание сочинений*, Т. 3. Москва.

obeyed. Notwithstanding his lack of money, the old man bought the dog a sandwich and not one for himself. Similar to Paustovsky's other stories on the behaviour of dogs, 'The old man in the station buffet', demonstrates the relation between the dog and the owner as one of respect and loyalty. This story shows that even in a crisis situation, the bond between a man and his dog cannot be compromised. Ecocritics would see this story as a perfect example of cohabitation between people and animals, where one would protect the interests of the other.

Paustovsky does not only present the relationship between people, cats and dogs, but also explores the relationship between people and domestic animals in their natural environment. 'The blue gelding' (1940) concerns the experience of watching the horses on a collective farm returning to the haystack enclosures after a night outside in the meadows. The observers who happened to be Paustovsky and Ruvim tried to guess what horses thought of when they were out at night. Paustovsky was of the opinion that they were too tired to think about anything. He felt that they were only interested in masticating grass, and breathing in fresh air. One day, however, on their way to a nearby lake they noticed a lonely gelding under the branches of a willow tree. As they passed he woke up, waved his thin tail and wandered past them, and then decided to follow them. When they sat at the campfire at night the gelding insisted on keeping them company.

They felt that there was something strange about the horse following them in the dark that made them uneasy. Paustovsky, however, held the view that there was always a logical explanation for animal behaviour. He recalled an experience he once had when a swallow flew behind him for hours and end. A wise old man explained that as he moved through the valley he was disturbing hundreds of grasshoppers and beetles and made it possible for the bird to feed with less effort.

However, Ruvim with his keen interest in the psychological make-up of animals, tried to determine whether animals functioned mentally in the same way as people. He reasoned

that the horse must be thinking about something, possibly about the cruelty of people to animals. During his lifetime he must have been treated badly. Coachmen, in particular, were cruel to horses, twisting their reins and demanding that they do more and more. The gelding had probably known nothing else except a life of hard labour, at times wheezing and sinking into the sand while pulling heavy carts. Ruvim tried to understand the behaviour of animals in terms of their life experience.

Early in the morning a stable-hand at the collective farm, Petya, who came to fetch the gelding, told them that the horse was now as an old man no longer able to work and that the same norms should apply to old animals as they are to people. Petya's suggestion was that old age homes should be established for horses that served people for all of their lives. Knowing that such a system did not exist, Petya tried to make the old age of the horse comfortable by taking good care of him, for example by walking with him in the meadows.

'The blue gelding' is yet another story that expresses an important ecocritical principle, namely that the lives of people and animals are intertwined. It is a question of interdependence, and mutual responsibility. In this case it is a farm horse that served people during his whole life, but is now too old to work. So it is people's responsibility to look after him.

Another example of Paustovsky's depiction of the relationship between people and domestic animals is 'The inhabitants of the old house'. In this short story he portrays the respect that dogs and cats have for cocks and hens. When Funtik the dog came across a cock, Funtic triumphantly raised some dust, and then backed off. Although cocks have the reputation of being aggressive, hens can even be fiercer. Paustovsky gives a vivid description of a malicious hen:

Но гораздо страшнее петуха была худая черная курица. На шее у нее была накинута шаль из пестрого пуха, и вся она походила на цыганку-гадалку. Купили эту курицу напрасно. Недаром старухи по деревне говорили, что куры делаются черными от злости.

Курица эта летала, как ворона, дралась и по несколько часов могла стоять на крыше и без перерыва кудахтать. Сбить ее с крыши, даже кирпичом, не было возможности. Когда мы возвращались из лугов или из леса, то издали была уже видна эта курица – она стояла на печной трубе и казалась вырезанной из жести. (1983, 6: 249)

Far worse than the cock, was a skinny black hen. She wore a shawl of brightly coloured down and she looked like a gypsy fortune teller. They should not have bought that hen. Not for nothing do the old women in the village say that hens turn black with malice.

The hen could fly like a raven. It could fight and stand for several hours on the roof clucking without ceasing. It was impossible to dislodge her from the roof, even with a brick. When we came back from the meadows or the forest, we could see her from afar, standing on the stove chimney and looking as if cut out of tin. (1986: 200)

Paustovsky portrays the black hen as an ominous creature whose attitude will bring inevitable trouble. The comparison of the feathers of the hen to the bright colours of a gypsy's shawl highlights the dramatic look and character of the hen. Her extraordinary qualities are also suggested. Similar to fortune tellers she commanded respect because of the superstitious believe that she knew something unknown to ordinary mortals. It is no wonder that people and animals alike fear the hen, and therefore try not to upset her routine in the garden of the old house. The cocks would from time to time flutter their wings on the approach of people or animals. However they did not attack, because they knew that would be the task of the hen. The hen sometimes sat on a roof and the author compares her to a tin hen that one often finds on the roofs of inns in Russia. Through this

image the author stresses her superiority over the other living creatures on the property. She was in fact considered its caretaker

An ecocritical reading of this story stresses universal ecological philosophy; in particular that nature is constructed in terms of a number of predetermined principles, such as the fact that certain strong creatures will always dominate weaker ones.¹²⁹ In ‘The inhabitants of the old house’, for example, the hen assumes the position of importance greater even than that of the people and animals surrounding her. Paustovsky illustrates that any creature on earth could be dominant in the ecological hierarchy, not necessarily people. Ecocritics, such as White, believe that the universe is a well organised entity where people and animals instinctively know who are dominant over the other.¹³⁰

In ‘The inhabitants of the old house’ as in many of his other short stories, Paustovsky once again excels in conveying the essence of the behaviour of animals by attributing human characteristics to them. In this instance the presence of a frog in the author’s house is compared to that of children who gather around a table to hear a fairy tale before bedtime. He portrays the frog as experiencing similar emotions of enchantment as children listening to a fairytale.

Огонь то вспыхивал, то ослабевал от сгоравших в ламповом стекле зеленых мошек. Должно быть, он казался лягушке большим алмазом, где, если долго всматриваться, можно увидеть в каждой грани целые страны с золотыми водопадами и радужными звездами. (1983, 6: 250)

The flame would flare up then die down, because of the green flies being consumed in the lampshade. It must have looked to the frog like a huge diamond, if you stared at it

¹²⁹ Bochen, M. 1982. The ecology of freedom. The emergence and dissolution of hierarchy. UK.

¹³⁰ White, L. 1996. The historical roots of our ecological crisis. In: *The ecocriticism reader*. Ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. Athens, London.

long enough, you might see in each facet entire countries with golden waterfalls and rainbow-coloured stars. (1986: 202)

When travelling in foreign countries such as France and Italy, Paustovsky notes that the nature of these countries is similar to that of Russia. In his autobiographical essay, *Ilyinsky waters* (1964), Paustovsky describes a visit to France, and how he bonded with this country. The reader gets the impression that he could love France just as much as his own country and that he could be happy there, as long as he could experience its nature. After having visited a grey Paris, and the tomb of Jean Jacques Rousseau, he realised that France was magnificent, however, he was homesick for Russia. This feeling was brought about by the ‘saucy shrieks’ (1983, 6: 592) of the village cocks. Although the novelist appreciates the symbolism attached to the cock in France and also acknowledges that it representing the nation’s values of democracy, equality and liberty, he is able to associate the cock with the essence of Russia, too:

На святой Руси петухи кричат, —
Скоро будет день на святой Руси (1983, 6; 592).

The roosters are crowing over Holy Russia —
Over Holy Russia it will soon be day (1986: 366).

In Russian culture the rooster has several connotations. During the early tsarist era the rooster was considered the symbol of the kingdom and also as the protector of the tsar. In ancient paintings, for example, the rooster is portrayed as sitting on the throne of the tsar. The crowing of the rooster signifies the end of night, a period of darkness, and the arrival of a new day, clarity. Thus, it is possible that these strophes refer to the end of the tsarist regime and the prediction of dawn, that is of the Soviet era.

There are many similarities between the way in which Paustovsky depicts domestic and animals that live in the wild. He attributes human traits to both. This can be seen in his portrayal of birds, fish, rabbits and frogs. A reading of his prose from an ecocritical angle sheds new light on the way Paustovsky perceived the relationships between people and wild animals, linking these intimate relationships to the Russian culture. Ecocritics such as Glotfelty (1996), Heise (1997), Estok¹³¹ and, in particular, Manes (1996), emphasise the relationship between a country's natural environment, including the relationship between animals and its culture. They argue that many cultures place people and wild animals on the same level, because both are animated by the forces of life, and equally reflect the cultural traits of a nation.

This issue reverberates in many of Paustovsky's works. In several of his short stories the main way in which birds communicate with humans is through their crying, twittering and singing. There is, for example, nothing more uplifting when being outdoors at night and one hears the pure song of nightingales, as depicted in 'The sweetbriar' (1951). Listening to the song of the nightingales, people feel that they are in a holy place, and immersed in a wave of spiritually inspiring music. The short story shows that there are few other ways in which humans can experience such a close spiritual bond with birds.

An element prominent in Paustovsky's prose is the Russian superstition with regard to birds. It should be noted that in the early 1930s, when this novel was written, many Soviet people, notwithstanding the industrial progress of the country, still adhered to old superstitions. 'The last devil'(1936) describes how an old, dim-witted man, whom the villagers, tongue-in-cheek, called Ten Percent, claimed that he had met a 'devil' at the lake when he had gone there to search for wild berries. For a long time afterwards he maintained that devils were alive and well. As proof he showed his torn trousers where the devil had bitten him. However, due to his reputation as a cheat, no one believed him.

¹³¹ Estok, S. 2001. A report card on ecocriticism. *The journal of the Australasian Universities, Language and Literature Association* 96: 220–238.

Even the superstitious old people in the village mumbled that devils did not have beaks, and that the Bolsheviks had exterminated them to their last roots. Although the village people knew that they should not believe what Ten Percent said, they nonetheless no longer went to the lake to collect berries, claiming that they are not to be found there. They also thought up the excuse that they did not want to be confronted by bats which they probably feared as much as they feared birds.

The next morning, Ten Percent awoke the author and Ruvim and asked if they had heard the strange cry; 'yek, yek'. They then decided to investigate the noise. When the mist finally lifted from the lake they got to the edge and saw a strange, large bird on the lake, with lemon- and rose-coloured feathers. Its long neck was under the water. When the bird lifted its head out of the water Ruvim immediately recognised the bird as a pelican. The author then remembered an advertisement in a local newspaper in which people were informed that an African bird, a pelican flew away from a menagerie and warned that this bird can attack children and sometimes adults. The menagerie promised an award to anyone who brought the bird back. After this discovery, Ten Percent and the villagers had to accept there were indeed no devils on the lake. It is interesting to note how the author, in this story as in 'The blue gelding', stimulates the reader's curiosity by describing apparently inexplicable behaviour of animals, and then proceeds by giving a logical explanation for apparent 'misunderstandings'.

In Paustovsky's prose wild birds are closely associated with the changing of the seasons and the emotions that this phenomenon evokes in human beings. The main topic of the story 'Face to face with autumn' (1963) is that the universe is in fact a well-developed entity, functioning like clockwork in accordance with a predestined plan, independent of people. A first person narrator on a small boat on the Oka River, could hear what sounded like someone pouring water from one vessel to another. This made ringing sounds which seemed to fill the space between the river and the vault of heaven. Suddenly he realised that the bizarre sounds were made by cranes arranging themselves in order to establish

their positions in which to fly south, where the sun sparkles with 'quivering gold' (1983, 6: 577). The narrator, who abandoned his oars and sat for a long time watching this scene, understood that birds must leave because such is the law of nature. By accepting this law, he inadvertently expresses one of the main principles of ecocriticism, namely that nature functions according to a predestined pattern which is not controlled by people. In this case, certain birds of the northern hemisphere leave every year during autumn for the warm southern regions of the planet. The main topic of this story is that the universe is in fact a well-organised entity, functioning in accordance with a predestined plan, independent of people.

Paustovsky does not only highlight the behaviour of birds in nature, but also their behaviour in artificial surroundings. 'The rook in the trolleybus' (1953) presents the case of a bird that does not behave in an expected way.

One morning in early spring an extraordinary thing happened on a trolleybus. As was their habit, the people on the bus preferred to read rather than talk to the others. All of a sudden a black rook who was sitting under the coat of an eight-year-old girl showed its head. The girl wanted to bring the bird to the zoo and to release it there. Unlike the conductress on 'Travelling conversations', who ordered the dog to be put off the train, the conductress on the trolleybus showed sympathy for the bird. The rook scrutinised his surroundings in a serious, yet friendly way. He seemed to be amused by what he saw. One old lady was so intrigued by the rook and said that they who lived in Moscow could not know about birds. To them in Moscow there was no difference for example between a rook and a stirling. A general who boarded the bus told a story about stirlings that took place during the Second World War. One evening these birds made a lot of noise in the neutral territory between the German and Soviet troops. The Germans opened fire on the birds trying to stop the noise. The Russians opened fire on them and then the Germans stopped shooting at the birds. This episode illustrates the love of Russian people for animals and birds

What is interesting in this story is that the sudden appearance of the rook on the bus made people, who surely had rooks in their gardens yet paid little attention to them, now eager to learn more about them. This phenomenon is universal; people who live side by side with nature are often indifferent to their environment, but are awakened to their surroundings when something out of the ordinary happens. ‘The rook in the trolleybus’ carries an ecological message; in order to be able to relate birds that people encounter on a daily basis they should have a better knowledge of their habits. This will enable them to understand the birds better. When they, for example, encounter roosters they would be able to understand their habits and not only consider them as a nuisance in their gardens.

If stories such as ‘The rook in the trolleybus’ carry any ecological message, it might be that better knowledge of nature and of various creatures that share the natural environment with humans would enhance an understanding of their habits making the coexistence more rewarding.

Glotfelty (1996), Heise (1997), Cohen (2004) Larson (2007), Estok (2001) and many other ecocritics agree that there is a close connection between a nation’s culture and the way it relates to nature, including both tame and wild animals. In Paustovsky’s prose the close relation between Russian culture and wild animals is above-all present in his portrayal of the fishing tradition of the Russians, and all the rituals accompanying it.

The short story, ‘The golden tench’ (1936)¹³² describes a fishing trip that the author and Ruvim undertake on a lake in central Russia. The way in which the trip is portrayed in this story highlights fishing as one of the typical and important ways of relaxation and socialising that characterise Russian social life, which is probably also the case in many other countries. As Paustovsky portrays it fishermen rarely leave for such a trip on their own. There are usually onlookers of all kinds, some to criticise the efforts of the

¹³² A tench is a fresh water fish of the carp family.

fishermen and others just to make a pure nuisance of themselves. As is customary, these onlookers would predict that the fishermen were wasting their time. The writer considers little boys as the greatest nuisance, because of their habit swimming in the vicinity blowing bubbles and diving like horses. Other factors that had the potential of spoiling a fishing trip were logs submerged in the water, mosquitoes, duckweed, thunderstorms, rainy weather and rising water levels.

On this particular fishing expedition Ruvim succeeded in catching a tench. The author describes the tench in such a way that it is easy to appreciate its beauty.

Рувим нес линя. Он тяжело свисал у него с плеча. С линя капала вода, а чешуя сверкала так ослепительно, как золотые купола бывшего монастыря. В ясные дни купола были видны за тридцать километров. (1983, 6: 143)

Ruvim carried the tench. It hung heavily from his shoulder. It was dripping and its scales glittered dazzlingly like the golden domes of the former monastery. On clear days you could see those domes thirty kilometres away.

It is significant that Paustovsky compares the sight of the fish Ruvim caught to the golden domes of Russian monasteries. The glittering splendour of these monasteries could be seen miles away. It is the epitome of beauty in Russia and at the same time stands for the durability and the essence of the country's cultural values. The image of the domes, among others, refers to the Russian orthodox religion that for years has been part of the Russian value system, even during the difficult times of the Communist era.

As it is with fishermen, Russian too liked to share advice on how to improve fishing techniques. In the short story, 'The old man in the shabby overcoat' (1956) the first person narrator mentions that he spent the summer of 1924 in the small village of Bogovo, which was well-known for its excellent fishing waters. One day, when he was

fishing in this region, he came across an old man fishing in the same lake. The old man disapproved of his fishing method, which involved using three fishing rods, and resulted in the fish giving him the slip. In the old man's view this method was not good, because it scares of fish and disturbs a fisherman's mental balance. The narrator took his advice and began to fish with only one rod, which yielded immediate results, because he was more focused when fishing with one rod.

'The old man in the shabby overcoat' not only illustrates the link between successful fishing and personal satisfaction which enhances the fisherman's overall wellbeing, but also portrays fishing as a way of getting to know people's life story or even to develop bonds of friendship. Thus, the old man told the narrator that he had been an officer in the Russian army before the First World War, but later was reduced to the status of a beggar. It was only after his chance meeting with Lenin, that he was given a pension. Although this story illustrates just one episode of Lenin's kindness, it highlights a general belief in the Soviet Union in his exceptional benevolence. It should be noted that Paustovsky, in particular in his autobiography, often refers to the positive elements of Russian society under Lenin's regime. However, he seldom mentions the regime of Stalin.

The above story places certain singular events within the scope of the Russian economy. In the article, 'Fishing talks' (1930), Paustovsky describes the important role that the fishing industry has played for centuries in the Russian economy.¹³³ His position is similar to one proposed by modern ecologists. Paustovsky, like these ecologists, is of the opinion that the economic development of a country should be aligned to the protection of its natural resources, for example its fishing waters. Paustovsky's article contends that, even as early as the Middle Ages, Russians understood that fishing was important as a way of feeding people. It was an income-generating occupation. In Russia, fishing by-

¹³³ (Paustovsky) Паустовский, К. 1983. *Собрание сочинений*. Т. 7. Москва.

products such as caviar and fishing oil had been commercialised for centuries. Over the ages the country had taken care to ensure that its fishing waters were disease free. According to Paustovsky, a cargo of caviar was considered to be just as delicate as one of fresh flowers.

Paustovsky concludes the article by saying that Russians have always taken care to maintain the ecological balance of its fishing waters, for example, by ensuring that its fishing resources would not be depleted. It should be noted that this article was written in 1930, which was the peak of the industrial revolution in Russia. The industrial expansion had a catastrophic impact on the natural environment of the country, because frequently huge industrial plants were established in ecologically pure regions, which inevitably led to the pollution of the environment, especially of the rivers with industrial waste. The dams that were constructed to supply supplementary water for industrial projects brought further devastation by interrupting the natural flow of rivers with evident negative consequences for the environment.

Paustovsky's portrayal of the flora of Russia, similar to his depiction of the fauna also merits attention. He was not only interested in the aesthetic qualities of flowers, but also in a botanical knowledge of their properties. His skilful portrayal of the country's vegetation puts him on the same level as other Russian artists who extolled nature in their prose such as Pushkin (1799–1837), Turgenev (1818–1883), Bunin (1870–1935) and Prishvin (1873–1965). During his whole life Paustovsky regretted that he never had the opportunity to undertake botanical studies and to compile a botanical dictionary. Nevertheless during his lifetime he accumulated vast knowledge on the plant treasures in Central Russia.

In his autobiography, 'Story of a Life' (1964) he writes about his particular attachment to the countryside of Central Russia. For him, there is no other country that could match the lyrical and compelling beauty of this calm region, touched as it is by an element of

melancholy. He says that it is difficult to measure the strength of this attachment. He felt love for every blade of the grass, warmed by the sun's rays or heavy with dew.

In many instances, Paustovsky, highlights the mysterious qualities of plants and flowers. 'In the heart of Russia' (1950) contains particularly apt observations of the flora that for him has a power of poetic inspiration.

Что может быть лучше для писателя, – а он, по существу, всегда должен быть и поэтом, – чем открытие новых областей поэзии вблизи себя и тем самым обогащение человеческого восприятия, сознания, памяти? (1983, б: 443).

What could be better for a writer, and every writer must be a poet as well, than the discovery of new fields of poetry right beside him enriching his perception, understanding and memory of things (1986: 274).

The description of the plants in this region of Russia touches upon one of the important principles adhered to by ecocritics such as Glotfelty, namely that, although the manifestations of nature might appear entirely predictable, they also contain an element of mystery, often related to the cultural make-up of a nation.¹³⁴ In Paustovsky's writing this feeling originates from the visitor's expectation to encounter something unknown, extraordinary and unfathomable.

Ощущение таинственности возникает от ожидания неизвестного и не совсем обыкновенного. А густота и высота зарослей вокруг озера заставляли думать, что в них непременно скрывается что-нибудь до сих пор не виданное: [...] ядовитый цветок лоха с полым сочным стволом толщиной в человеческую руку. (1983, б: 444)

¹³⁴ *The ecocritical reader*. Ed. Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. Athens, London.

Ирисы [...] отражались в воде, и почему-то вокруг этого отражения всегда стояли толпами, как булавки, притянутые магнитом, серебряные мальки. (1983, 6: 444)

A sense of mystery comes from expecting something unknown and out of the ordinary. And, indeed, the height and denseness of the vegetation around the little lake made you think that there must be something unusual concealed in them: [...] in the poisonous flower of the oleaster with its juicy stalk as thick as a man's arm.

Irises [...] were reflected in the water and, for some reason, their reflection was always surrounded by shoals of minnow like pins drawn to a magnet. (1986, 275)

Paustovsky returns to the theme of the mysterious qualities assigned to some plants in his short story, 'The good fortune flower' (1953)¹³⁵. One day on his way back from the Bogovoe Lake, his attention is captured by the colourful display of the wild summer flowers:

На поляне около лесной опушки я увидел синие цветы. Они жались друг к другу. Заросли их были похожи на маленькие озера с густой синей водой (1983, 6: 482).

In a clearing near the edge of the forest I saw some blue flowers nestling together in clumps like small lakes of deep, blue water (1986: 326).

He had never seen these flowers before and decided to pick a large bunch, unaware that they are subject to a local innocent superstition. The people he met on his way behaved oddly friendly, thanking him affectionately. When an old woman saw the flowers, she also thanked him profusely. When the author asked what makes her behave in such a way she said she was not permitted to say, but told him to meet as many people possible.

¹³⁵ This name is a local name (not a scientific one) given by the local inhabitants to the type of flower described in the short story.

Everything became clear when the chairman of the village council told him that the flowers he found were rare and they are called Good Fortune Flowers. Only then he learned that according to popular belief these flowers bring true love to young girls and a peaceful old age and happiness to older woman.

The theme of certain flowers possessing unusual qualities also occurs in the story 'Newcomer from the south' (1952). During a conference Paustovsky met a collector of subtropical flowers, who gave him a small packet of flower seeds. He was told to plant the seeds in the Ryazan region, with the instruction that when the buds appear he was to sit with the plants and observe what happens. When the buds appeared in August they had the appearance of transparent porcelain and in a few seconds they burst out into bloom. People attending this event said that it was only once in a lifetime that one had the opportunity to experience such a miracle.

To the narrator, this event was symbolic of the beauty that makes life exciting. He also points out that this miracle of nature is not the same as 'technical miracles' performed by the communists. He believes that this experience is closer to the wonders of nature that captivated Russian people before the Revolution. He saw the sudden blooming of these subtropical flowers in the cold climate of Central Russia as symbolic of the Russian people, who were courageous in the face of adverse circumstances.

As he does with animals, Paustovsky also associates human qualities to plants. In a chapter of his autobiography, 'Pink oleanders' (1982, 4: 34–42), he admits that he often thought of flowers as of people. He uses metaphors that in a humoristic way portray visual qualities of young women that he considered to be really dull and uninteresting. To him the Mignonette flower was like an impoverished girl in a patched grey dress, whose fabulous origin was only betrayed by her wonderful scent. Tea-roses were like young society beauties that had lost their rosy cheeks from drinking too much tea. Pansies were gay, sly gypsies in velvet masks, dancers in motley clothes that were now blue, now

purple, now yellow. By contrast, daisies bored him. Their washed out pink colour reminded him of the daughters of his grandmother's neighbours, two little girls with tow-coloured hair and invisible eyebrows who held up their skirts and babbled incessantly time you met them.

In stories like this, the link with ecocriticism comes to mind. It alludes to what ecocritics identify as an important principle of their discipline, namely that people and the elements of nature, such as plants and animals, have many traits in common, which inspire such metaphorical analogies that Paustovsky makes in his tale.

It is impossible to talk about flora without reference to its traditional medicinal application; the theme which too is subject to ecocritical studies. Throughout his prose Paustovsky speaks of the healing qualities of various plants. The chief character of his tale 'In the heart of Russia' (1946), Dmitry Sergeevich is a chemist who devoted his life to discovering the medicinal properties of plants growing in Russia.

According to Dmitry, nearly all plants contained substances that were either beneficial or poisonous. His task was to extract the juices, and to determine their properties and the uses to which they could be put. Some properties had been discovered a long time ago, such as those of the lily of the valley and foxgloves, both improving the cardiological function. However, there were still thousands of plants that had not been studied. This encouraged Dmitry to continue with his research.

For the first time the author met Dmitry one summer, when he was engaged in extracting vitamins from young pine needles. In order to share knowledge of plants, Paustovsky writes, Dmitry gave him a book on botany containing descriptions of plants and herbs, as well as guidelines with regard to how to prepare medicines from plants such as moss, lichen and mushrooms.

Dimitry also told him that he relies on young boys to collect plants that possess medicinal properties. The boys spared no effort in the task, even going to the most remote parts of the Ryazan region, where other people rarely went. Although the boys asked little in return, from an ecocritical viewpoint their involvement is of paramount importance. It exposed them to knowledge which otherwise might be dying out and opened the way for them to apply this knowledge later in life. The involvement of a younger generation in projects, such as those focusing on ecological awareness, guarantees transfer of knowledge and values between generations, ensuring that they remain part of national culture.

In conclusion, it can be said that this chapter illustrates Paustovsky's depiction of the fauna and flora of Russia in the context of modern ecocriticism. The analysis of a number of his short stories and his biographical writing highlights several themes that coincide with ecocritical findings. Among those that are identified as having social relevance here are his portrayal of the Russian fauna and flora. As mentioned in previous chapters, in his description of nature, Paustovsky always emphasises the interconnection between people, animals and plants. It is this kind of attitude that ecocritics would classify as a bio-centric view of nature. This point of view ensures peaceful coexistence of people, animal and plants. Furthermore regardless of the predictable, orderly and well established manner that governs the functions of nature, Paustovsky demonstrates that one cannot disregard the element of misery and surprise that nature might have. This is an important point for it underscores nature being a living organism, not mechanical and unresponsive,

In respect of the place of fauna and flora in a nation's culture which is yet another important area of ecocritical interest Paustovsky's books provide ample useful illustrative material. His portrayal of animals such as cocks and fish, as well as his references to medicinal plants, show that they all play an important role in Russian culture.

From the stylistic point of view it is important to note that in all his stories it is possible to establish certain analogy between the habits and behaviour of people and that of

animals, both tame and those who live in the wild. The analogy proves not only his skills as a keen observer of people and nature, but also his wit and great sense of humour. Similar comment applies to comparisons of people and flowers.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study is to prove that when the imagery of nature in Paustovsky prose is analysed from an ecocritical perspective, his work is still significant and not outdated as generally believed. An ecocritical analysis of a work in which nature features takes into account the following aspects: if an author presents ecological issues in his writing, the connection between the natural surroundings of a nation and its culture as well as the correlation between the emotions of people and their natural environment. This part of the study summarises the research conducted, the assumptions of the thesis, conclusions reached and the way forward with regard to the analysis of Russian prose with nature as subject from an ecocritical angle.

The Introduction sets out the research problem of the thesis and contains a selective overview of the existing critics on Paustovsky's prose as well as of the Soviet policies on nature conservation from the 1920s to 1950s. Chapter One presents a theoretical basis for the study of a literary work in which nature features from an ecocritical perspective. Chapter Two presents two different attitudes on forestry conservation, on the one hand, the Soviet policy of sacrificing forests in the 1930s in order to suit the government's economic policies and on the other hand, an improvement of its forestry policies after the Second World War. Chapter Three emphasises the way in which Paustovsky uses the symbolism of water and nature phenomena to underscore literary and cultural issues. Chapters Four to Five illustrate how Paustovsky's imagery of the seasons of the year and the fauna and flora of Russia depict important ecological issues, as well as the essence of Russian culture and the interdependence between the emotions of people and their natural environment.

In order to demonstrate that Paustovsky's nature-orientated prose is still relevant today the following assumptions were tested.

The first assumption is that the novelist's ecological awareness as expressed in his prose is comparable to that of modern ecologists and that it assists scholars to have a better understanding of the history of Russian nature conservation.

The development of Paustovsky's ecological thinking on the conservation of forests is demonstrated through the comparison of his novels *Colchis* and *A tale of woods*. These two novels convey opposite approaches to forest conservation.

Colchis presents the optimism of the 'new' Soviet people to replace their swampy jungle environment caused by natural catastrophes with subtropical vegetation not indigenous to the region. They blindly follow the communist dogma of the time namely that if people apply their minds to their goals they can move from the 'possible towards the impossible'. In this case it implies transforming nature to serve the government's economic policies as well as their own need to rid the region from malaria. These ecological policies are selfish not taking into account that such a project will apart from the ruining of indigenous trees, also destroy the vegetation and small animals of the region. It does not enter their minds that their actions might influence the ecological balance in the neighbouring regions and bring about climate changes.

In *A tale of woods* Paustovsky's position on the restoration of forests steers closer to that currently adhered to by current ecologists. Whereas in *Colchis* the possible wrong-doing of the inhabitants of the region to replace the current vegetation by non-indigenous vegetation is not once mentioned. *A tale of woods* does not attribute the damage of forests to natural catastrophes as in *Colchis*, but solely to the negligence of people of their natural environment. Besides expressing criticism with regard to a merchant who in the middle of the 19th century chopped down age-old trees enrich himself with the income from timber, the novel also criticises the acts of war during the Second World War that resulted in the destruction of precious forests. Although the protagonists of *A tale of woods* have different perspectives with regard to how this restoration of forests must be

approached, they never deviate from their original intention to improve the well-being of the Russian forests.

In addition to addressing forestry problems, Paustovsky's prose touches upon another ecological issue, namely if people can successfully intervene in the natural cycles of nature such as the seasons of the year. The short story 'The gift' opens with the observation that climate changes are a regular occurrence. Summer is often longer than expected and winter shorter. When a young friend of Paustovsky brings him a small birch tree, he decides to launch an experiment with the boy namely to see if the tree when kept indoors can last longer than the birch trees in the garden. However, this does not happen. This event serves as an occasion for the author to explain to his young friend that notwithstanding seemingly favourable circumstances such as a warm room, the seasons of the year still follow their course. In his autobiography, *Story of a life*, he tells how his mother and sister tried to imitate spring in their apartment by painting the walls yellow. The author categorically states that such an experiment is doomed to fail, because it is nothing but a dull replication of spring not representing its symbolism, such as the regeneration of life on earth.

One of Paustovsky's contributions to understand the ecological debate in Soviet Russia is his underscoring of the differences between Soviets with regard to the establishing of a relationship between people and nature. In this respect, his short story 'A Moscow summer' portrays the project of a Soviet architect Hoffman to build a perfect circular glass house where nature was supposed to be a master inside the house just as outside. His friends invited to evaluate the merit of the house, did not like the house. They did not appreciate the house with its pure air, but instead preferred the pollution of Moscow, because to them it signified the 'positive' results of the Industrial Revolution.

A theme widely discussed by nature conservationists is the lack of knowledge of people with regard to the other creatures in their natural environment, in particular animals. This

topic is addressed by Paustovsky in 'The rook in the trolleybus'. It conveys the astonishment of passengers when suddenly saw a rook in the bus. Although they encountered rooks on a daily basis, it seems as if seeing the bird in isolation in the artificial surroundings, the passengers were for the first time in their lives really interested in the bird's behaviour. Their curiosity was increased when a general told them a story about stirlings that took place during the Second World War. *A tale of woods* stresses the important role of ecological experts and biological scientists to inform people on how nature functions as well as how people can holistically contribute to preserve their natural heritage.

Taking into account the importance of the constituent elements of nature conservation in Paustovsky's prose, it can be concluded that he is not a mere representative of socialist realist literature. On the contrary, his portrayal of ecological issues and nature conservation in Russia during the Communist period provides scholars of ecology with an important insight into the history of Russian ecology policies as well as how and for what reasons nature was damaged and in particular the solutions implemented to try and reverse this negative situation. What is an eye-opener in Paustovsky's prose and excludes him from merely incorporating soviet ecology policies in this work is that he as early in the nineteen forties, similar to current ecologists, recommended that people be educated with regard to nature conversation and that this education should preferably be done by academics in the ecological field.

The second assumption is that Paustovsky's prose merits to be analysed from an ecocritical perspective, because it familiarises the reader with the interaction between nature and the Russian culture, especially with the way how the author's portrayal of the nature in the Central Russia highlights the essence of the Russian culture. This aspect frequently appears in the ensemble of his prose. In 'The golden rose' he indicates how his contact with the Russian nature, improved his knowledge and use of the Russian lexicon of the local inhabitants of this region. It was not only a question of introducing new

words to his vocabulary, but also becoming familiar with their attributes expressing touch, sight, sound, taste and smell. Paustovsky also portrays how the compositions of Tchaikovsky were inspired by the sounds of the forests and how the essence of the Russian forests radiated a lyrical force that is also present in the works of Russian painters such as Levitan and Nesterov. Paustovsky does not only depict the Russian forests as having inspired well-known artists, but also ordinary Russians. In 'Aquarelle Colours' he for example, describes how an amateur painter, Berg, who spent many years in France could not really find any inspiration in painting nature, until he returned to Russia and became mesmerised by the beauty of the Russian landscape when he saw the reflection of the sun on the birch trees leaves. Besides portraying nature as an inspiration for a person's lexicon and artistic creations, Paustovsky's prose informs readers on the essential elements of Russian culture, such as the superstitions that Russians attribute to certain plants and animals and the rituals of a fishing expedition. He describes how the common knowledge of the link between nature and cultural traditions serves as a factor of unison between the Russian folk.

The third assumption is that an ecocritical analysis of Paustovsky's depiction of nature demonstrates that his writing is on par with subjects that interest modern scholars in the field of psychology, for example to what extent humans and nature accommodate one another and enter into a relationship of symbiosis on 'physical' and 'spiritual' levels.

His prose reflects the way in which nature-related events positively or negatively influence the psyche of people. As mentioned in Chapter Two, it is a question of how the 'outer landscape' of people influences their 'inner landscape'. In his short story 'A night in October', for example, the overflowing of the Oka River symbolises the inner turbulence of two people and makes them think about the sense of life. The way in which nature influences the psychological wellbeing of people or their suffering is in particular clear in his depiction of the seasons of the year, where a cold, rainy. An autumn day might, for example, give rise to depression.

Concerning the way forward, this thesis, as far as could be ascertained, is the first attempt to analyse the Soviet realist writer in whose prose nature plays a major role applying certain ecocritical teachings. Although it benefited from a better understanding that the ecocritical debate developed on the relationship between humans and nature. The examination underpins the suitability of the discipline ecocriticism to analyse nature-orientated literary works, such as those by Paustovsky. It in particular exposes a writer's interest in ecology-related matters. One should also keep in mind that ecocriticism is still in its infancy and that more sophisticated ways to analyse nature-orientated literary works can be expected in the future. It is recommended that the rich treasure of Russian literary works in which nature plays an important role be subjected to an ecological examination. This will without doubt uncover certain dimensions of their prose that up to present have not received attention from literary ecocritics.

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APPENDIX

English titles of Konstantin Paustovsky's works, referred to in this thesis

A late spring – Поздняя весна

Alone with Autumn – Наедине с осенью

A Moscow summer – Московское лето

Aquarelle colours – Акварельные Краски

A rainy dawn – Дожливый рассвет

A tale of woods – Повесть о лесах

Colchis – Колхида

Cordon '237' – Кордон '237'

Crimean spring – Крымская весна

Faraway years – Далекie годы

Fishing talk – Разговор о рыбе

For the beauty of the Motherland- За красоту родной земли

Good fortune flower – Приточная трава

Pynsky Waters – Ильинский омут

Inscription on a boulder – Надпись на валуне

In the heart of Russia – Во глубине России

Isaac Levitan – Исаак Левитан

Lump sugar – Колотый сахар

Lyonka from the Little Lake – Ленка с Малого озера

Meshchora Region – Мещёрская сторона

Newcomer from the south – Пришелец с юга

Night in October – Ночь в октябре

Sea inspiration – Морская прививка

Short stories – Рассказы

Snow – Снег

Story of a life – Повесть жизни

The birth of a short story – Рождение рассказа

The Black Sea – Черное море

The blue gelding – Сивый мерин

The breeze – Бриз

The golden rose – Золотая роза

The golden tench – Золотой линь

The inhabitants of the old house – Жильцы старого дома

The last devil – Последний черт

The last meeting – Последняя встреча

The log hut in the forests – Избушка в лесу

The old boat – Старый челн.

The old cook – Старый повар

The old man in the shabby overcoat – Старик в потертой шинели

The overflows of rivers – Разливы рек

The prayer of Madame Bové – Молитва Мадам Бове

The rook in the trolleybus – Грач в троллейбусе

The rubber dingy – Резиновая лодка

The sweetbriar – Шиповник

The stealing cat – Кот-ворюга

The telegram – Телеграмма

The unknown lady – Незнакомка

The yellow light – Желтый свет

Travelling conversations – Дорожные разговоры