

Technologies of Affect in D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*

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Abstract

As stated in 'A Propos of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*,' Lawrence's novel depicts the 'counterfeit emotional life' as symptomatic of the post-war capitalist nation and hegemonic machine culture. Not only do lords of industry such as Lord Chatterley reify and exploit the working class but the various state apparatuses, in the form of housing development, landscaping, publishing and the media, ideologically interpellate citizens by manufacturing taste, sensation and affect. An early conversation at Wragby Hall among 'the young intellectuals of the day' affirms that all social formations of the day, the bourgeois state as well as bolshevist Russia, operate according to the laws of the machine, driving even the younger generation to value display of success and power over the vital principles of life. Even the artists are duped, manipulating the publishing industry to produce images of themselves as 'the most modern of modern voices.' Perhaps, in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the human body itself has been most severely devalued, turned into a field of thrills, flirtings, coqueties, games and 'sex things.' My essay primarily examines how Lawrence's novel both diagnoses this 'imaginary body' and manufactures an alternative desiring machine through attention to, what Brian Massumi calls, 'pre-signifying' affect, motilities of flesh, rhythm, touch, musical sound, gropings toward the other. Although the lovers, Connie Chatterley and Oliver Mellors, are at the center of such an investigation, habitats of nature interface with the human world. What I emphasize is the *expression* of the complex ecological awareness in the novel: it is possible to view the connection to nature through Connie's perspective as a 'becoming,' an approximation, which educates and opens up the human body to life-sustaining affect: tenderness, pleasure, sorrow, courage and passion.

Keywords: D. H. Lawrence; *Lady Chatterley's Lover*; expression; affect theory; imaginary body; embodiment

Readers concerned with D. H. Lawrence's use of language in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* often couple this with the novel's analysis of power relations and ideological critique. In an essay from 1985, Lydia Blanchard asserts the ambiguity of the novelistic discourse as it strives both to articulate human sexuality and at the same time undermines that effort in resistance to social control (1985: 17-35). Disagreeing with Blanchard, Michael Bell notes Lawrence's affirmation of language as a potential

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medium of feeling, critiquing individuals' emotional poverty rather than the symbolic field itself (1992: 208-221). Focusing on the sexual and class politics of the novel, Robert Burden applauds the writing as *écriture féminine*, a mode of subverting the hierarchical binaries of Western thought (2000: 287-343). More recently, Marina Ludwigs understands Lawrence's novel as an advocacy of vitalism that yearns for a 'return to the prelinguistic moment before the origin of language' (2011: 1). According to Ludwigs, the irrefutable mediation of representation nevertheless dominates the relationship between Connie Chatterley and Oliver Mellors, subduing them to masochistic behaviour, 'willing humiliation and self-abasement' (2011: 6). Problematizing Lawrence's vitalism as indeed receptive to modernity and to the new technologies, both David Trotter (2013) and Aleksandr Prëgozkin (2018) analyse the imagination of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* as 'techno-primitivist,' as exploiting, for instance, synthetic fashion and media such as the radio to express a holistic vision that captures 'the natural in the synthetic rather than before and beyond it' (Trotter 2013: 106).

Drawing upon this scholarship, my essay aims to reassess what Bell calls 'the articulacy theme' in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1992: 217) through the lens of contemporary affect theory, especially the branch underpinned by Gilles Deleuze's philosophy of expression and elaborated upon in various contexts by Brian Massumi's work on politics, aesthetics and ethics.¹ In my view, at the center of Lawrence's novel is the juxtaposition between a vision of integrated embodiment and the sharp diagnosis of the 'imaginary body' of the post-war capitalist nation, a symptom of, as stated in 'A Propos of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*,' the 'counterfeit emotional life' (1993: 312). Not only do lords of industry such as Lord Chatterley reify and exploit the working class but the various state apparatuses, in the form of housing development, landscaping, publishing and the media, ideologically interpellate citizens by manufacturing taste, sensation and affect. Counter to the hegemonic discourses that lure all social classes, genders, professions and generations into, in the words of Slavoj Žižek, 'enjoying their symptoms,' the creative effort of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* manufactures an alternative desiring machine through

¹ Works by Massumi that I will rely on in this essay are the introduction to his edition, *A Shock to Thought: Expression after Deleuze and Guattari* (2002); *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (2002); and the book of interviews, *Politics of Affect* (2015).

attention to what Brian Massumi calls 'pre-signifying affect,' motilities of flesh, rhythm, touch, musical sound, gesture and gropings toward the other.² Thus, in Lawrence's novel, expressing alternatives to the stale conditions of the modern nation constitutes an *event* that involves complex, heterogeneous encounters with otherness, an awareness that is only partly conscious and verbal, but nonetheless discursive and meaningful. In the following, I will be concerned with the encounters between the lovers Connie and Mellors, and will also examine how their emerging embodied awareness interfaces with the nonhuman environment, with habitats of nature. What the novel hopefully expresses is a complex ecological consciousness, neither regressive, nostalgic nor romantic. Rather it is possible to view the connection to nature through Connie's perspective as a 'becoming,' an approximation, which educates and opens up the human body to life-sustaining affect: tenderness, pleasure, sorrow, courage and passion.

Enjoy Your Symptom

The cynical denial of post-war trauma is dramatized in early scenes in the novel, involving Lord Chatterley's guests in conversation about issues of the day, the relationship between men and women, love, sex, marriage and politics. The most active talkers are Clifford's former classmates from Cambridge, 'the young intellectuals of the day' (1993: 31), who, notwithstanding their analytic acuity, typify capitalist discourse in attempts to define what is variously referred to as the 'sexual problem,' 'the sex thing' and 'the love business' (1993: 32, 74). Almost all the comments reveal what Becker and Panteleimon Manoussakis refer to as 'a univocal understanding of the body' (2018: 5), an abstract, objectifying notion of corporality, inscribed in, and exploited by, market economies. The abstract body is amenable to anatomization, which in its turn is utilized by scientific investigation and intellectual analysis as well as by socio-political representations. Thus, dissecting the 'sexual problem,' the 'highly-mental gentlemen' (37) at Wragby, eclipse the real bodily experiences of the recent war, corpses of the young, the traumatized psyches of veterans, the crippled returning soldiers—the very fragility of

² *Enjoy Your Symptom!: Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and Out* is the title of Žižek's book (1992); the discussion of 'pre-signifying affect' occurs throughout Massumi's *Parables of the Virtual* (2002).

flesh—instead discoursing abstractly on love and marriage as if processes separate from risk, shock, change and suffering. A womanizing bachelor, Charlie May aims to sanitize sexuality by contending that making love to a woman is ‘just an interchange of sensation instead of ideas’ (Lawrence 1993: 33). Challenged to rationalize on the topic, Clifford defends marriage as the practice of ‘intimacy,’ although he downplays it also as the end of romantic love: ‘marry-and-have-done-with-it’ (Lawrence 1993: 35). According to Hammond, a married man and a writer, the ‘sexual problem’ is non-existent, on a par with the secrecies of bodily functions in the W.C. Generally, the talk of the men underscores the summary view of Clifford’s aunt, Lady Bannerley, who in a later scene, declares that ‘so long as you can forget your body, you are happy. [...] And the moment you begin to be aware of your body, you are wretched. So if civilization is any good, it has to help us to forget our bodies, and then time passes happily, without our knowing it’ (Lawrence 1993: 75).

As Becker and Panteleimon aver in their introduction to *Unconscious Incarnations: Psychoanalytic Perspectives on the Body* (2018), the anatomizable body represses the real phenomenon of flesh, ‘the invisible lived-experience of the visible body’ (9) and, from a psychoanalytic perspective, is the consequence of ego-formation within the imaginary context of the (Lacanian) mirror stage. Instigating self-consciousness in the very young child, the reflected ‘mirage’ of wholeness in a mirror (or in the eyes of others) is gleefully adopted, even if it contradicts inner turmoil, ‘his motor incapacity and nursling dependence’ (Lacan 1977: 1-2). The identification with the specular image triggers the sense of unity in an *I*, forming the *ego* as a protective shell, prior to the full launch into the symbolic registrar and the divided subjectivity such an experience entails. During the socializing process, the ego-body tends toward self-sovereignty, the narcissistic nurture of the *Ideal I*, that psychic dimension which diminishes otherness and that within socio-political contexts precipitates exclusiveness in the form, for instance, of racism and authoritarian communities. In *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, the repressed (and repressive) ego-body dominates the social order as typified in the masculine community at Wragby Hall and analysed by one of the visitors, Tommy Dukes, a rather odd figure, an army man, who critically observes the social spectacle from the sidelines. According to Dukes, self-enhancement is the driving force of modern life, ‘I see how inordinately strong the craving for self-assertion and success is in men. It is enormously

overdeveloped. All our individuality has run that way. [...] The life of the mind hinges on the instinct for success. That is the pivot on which all things turn' (Lawrence 1993: 32). Generally, the depictions of modern England in the novel confirm Dukes' diagnosis, castigating even those with artistic ambitions, such as the Irish dramatist Michaelis and Lord Chatterley himself, for having prostituted themselves to 'the bitch-goddess of Success' (21). The crippled Clifford Chatterley, of course, presents an almost grotesque metonym for the culture's psychosomatic symptoms: eliding the real body within, broken, maimed, suffering, he asserts himself by diminishing others, women, foreigners, servants and the working class.

Not only does the idealized ego-culture breed autocratic ideologies but it also generates, as Lawrence phrases it in 'A Propos of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*,' the 'counterfeit emotional life' (1993: 312), perverse enjoyment, inauthentic sensations and mistaken goals of happiness. Because emotion is severed from perception and sensation rooted in flesh, communication, public as well as private, and communal relationships remain superficial, lacking fellow-feeling and compassionate engagements. Again, Tommy Dukes is discerning about the social problem, noting how conversations, 'the way we talk each other over,' are coloured either by 'spontaneous spite' or 'concocted sugaries' (Lawrence 1993: 37), signs not only of bourgeois individualism but equally of bolshevist politics. Without vibrant affective flows, human activity deteriorates into meaningless spectacles where even love is an empty signifier; Dukes' prognosis is bleak:

Love's another of those half-witted performances, today. Fellows with swaying waists fucking little jazz girls with small boy buttocks like two collar-studs? Do you mean that sort of love? Or the joint-property, make-a-success-of it, my-husband, my-wife sort of love? (Lawrence 1993: 39)

This observation echoes Lawrence's reflections on 'modern sex' in 'A Propos of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*,' where the cult of personality is blamed for unfulfilled, hateful marriages and contrasted with embodied love ('blood-marriage,' Lawrence calls it) that communicates 'blood-sympathy' and 'blood-contact,' another 'desiring machine' entirely, propelled by the loss of the personal and imbrication in the motilities of primordial flesh (Lawrence 1993: 326-7).³

³ I borrow 'desiring machine' from Deleuze and Guattari but use it in a broad sense to indicate the hybrid, constructive body (*Anti-Oedipus* 1977).

The emotional alienation of modern culture becomes most blatantly apparent in the poverty of its media, in aesthetic representations as well as in more concrete articulations of taste and sensibility such as landscaping and housing developments in the Midlands communities. In chapter XL, during Connie's drive from Wragby through Tevershall and the mining countryside towards Uthwaite, a small town with historical ties to the Chatterleys, an important description of the condition of England pinpoints the national malaise. Terms such as 'ugly,' 'dismal,' 'forlorn,' 'squalid' and 'mechanical' run insistently through the passage (Lawrence 1993: 152-160), marking almost all features of the surroundings, houses, shops, pubs, churches, schools, the steelworkers and the miners, even the children. Noteworthy is the absence of any beautifying detail such as the 'sudden glamour about the countryside' that Lawrence, in one of the essays featuring his native Midlands, contrasts to the 'the sordid sense of humanity' (2004: 15-16) he witnesses as appalled as Lady Chatterley, his fictional focalizer.⁴ Clearly, the novelist provides no relief from the sordid human environment and what is more highlights the causal chain which binds together counterfeit emotion, exploited workers' bodies, squalid dwellings, prison-like schools and the 'strange, bawling' singing of schoolgirls, so out of tune that 'anything more unlike song, spontaneous song, would be impossible to imagine' (Lawrence 1993: 152). The harsh diagnosis undertaken in the Midlands passage captures England in the grip of a diseased body politic.

Further, as I have hinted at previously, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is concerned with how modern art is caught up in the vicious circle of sordid life. Although the outputs of Lord Chatterley and the dramatist Michaelis at first glance seem to be 'making it new,' they turn out to be empty signifiers, clever, self-serving displays. That artistic expression of the day is fed by the imaginary ego-body is a major issue becomes evident in the narrator's (and Connie's) reflections on the art of the novel, where gossip narrative, lurid and emotionally cold, is pitted against 'the novel, properly handled,' a sympathetic art form, that taps into affective flows, expressing potential, cathartic and empowering:

⁴ The essays in question are 'Back to Bestwood' and 'Nottingham and the Mining Countryside,' both written a few years after a visit to the Midlands in 1926. The citations are from 'Back to Bestwood.'

And here lies the vast importance of the novel, properly handled. It can inform and lead into new places the flow of our sympathetic consciousness, and it can lead our sympathy away in recoil from things gone dead. Therefore the novel, properly handled, can reveal the most secret places of life: for it is in the *passional* secret places of life, above all, that the tide of sensitive awareness needs to ebb and flow, cleansing and freshening. (Lawrence 1993: 101, emphasis in original)

The 'sensitive awareness' of the authentic novel is enabled by a polyvocal understanding of the body, by, avowed by Lawrence in 'Introduction to These Paintings,' 'the whole consciousness of man working together in unison and unity: instinct, intuition, mind, intellect, all fused into one complete consciousness' (1968: 574). As I will continue to examine in the next section, the ambition of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is to counteract monologic art by exploring the other invisible body in the event of expression.

Event, Affect, Expression.

In his work on expressionist aesthetics and Lawrence's fiction, Jack Stewart notes that even if it is difficult to point to direct influences of painters such as Edward Munch and Vincent van Gogh, the novelist shares with those 'an attitude to life, an attitude of the senses, not of the mind' (1980: 296).⁵ As the brushstrokes of expressionist painters—mobile, rhythmic, emotionally laden, excessive—seem intimately allied with the sensual bodies that produce them, so Lawrence's dynamic images and rhythmic cadences evoke ineffable sensations, that even if verbally expressed stretch beyond the linguistic level into other types of discourse, musical sound, bodily gestures and dance, kinetic flows and trance-like repetitions. Similar to Munch's wavy and vibrant lines, energetic as well as disturbing, Lawrence's expressions oscillate between conscious apprehensions and unconscious intimations and then on occasion transcend the individual plateau, fanning out in an abstract cosmic dimension. In Stewart's interpretation, the frequent shifts in Lawrence's fiction between realistic detail and expressionistic excess displace personal subjects so that they 'disappear, absorbed in a groundswell of sensation' (1980: 306). In comments on the art of fiction, Lawrence himself often dwells on the roots of expressionism in the affective life,

⁵ Stewart's book on Lawrence and the expressionist painters is *The Vital Art of D. H. Lawrence: Vision and Expression* (1999).

stating, for instance, in the essay ‘New Mexico,’ that he uses ‘sensual to mean an experience deep down in the senses, inexplicable and inscrutable’ (quoted by Stewart 1980: 306) and in the ‘Foreword’ to *Women in Love* contending that the struggle to articulate the inscrutable body should ‘not be left out in art’: ‘this struggle for verbal consciousness [...] It is the passionate struggle into conscious being’ (quoted by Stewart 1980: 304).

As Lawrence’s fiction generally, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* dramatizes expression as an event, as, in the words of Brian Massumi, ‘a shock to thought’ that triggers a new affective flow that exceeds any conventional episteme or doxa, but impinges on realms of otherness, leading to potential vital changes and revaluations of values.⁶ Not concerned exclusively with aesthetic expressionism, Massumi transposes Gilles Deleuze’s ideas about language, the body and event into cultural theory, in various publications critiquing both the Cartesian view of the self-sovereign subject and the postmodern ‘prison-house of language,’ instead positing fluid subjectivities conditioned by affective encounters, by ‘the ability to affect and to be affected’ (2002b: 35). Contrary to the identity politics of poststructuralist cultural theory, where resistance to hegemonic domination is only possible via gender, race and class, contemporary affect theory investigates the unmediated body in everyday contexts and situations, albeit, according to Massumi, this project is no less ‘culturally-theoretically thinkable’ than previous ideological approaches (2002b: 3). In fact, it would be a misunderstanding to label this variant of affect theory as ahistorical as the focus is minutely situational, facilitating detailed analysis of a circumscribed, yet flexible, socio-cultural dynamic. Following Deleuze, Massumi endeavours to navigate between realism and subjectivism by putting ‘materiality [...] back into cultural materialism, along with what seemed most directly corporeal back into the body’ (2002b: 3). Instead of being hemmed in by a certain socio-cultural position, bodies are apprehended in motion, underpinned by sensation or affect, indeterminate in their nuanced passage within intricate affective relations with themselves and others (2002b: 15). The strength of Massumi’s materialistic cultural model is that it enhances the potential for change as there is constantly a virtual elsewhere beckoning subjects to open themselves up to new empirical dimensions.

⁶ *A Shock to Thought* is the title of Massumi’s edited volume of essays (2002).

This may seem an obvious definition of eventfulness, but as Duffy and Atkinson state 'there is significant complexity, for it refers to a range of processes from the affected states of bodies to the relaying of movement by individual bodies and connection between bodies' (2014: 107). Affect then always implies an interactive context and because of the dynamic mix of bodies a sense of emergence, an excess to the situational. Massumi refers to this excess as the *virtual* and perceives registers of affect as always on the edge of virtualities, as perpetually open to the hazards of change. Even in representation, in the expression of personal emotion, for instance, there is 'the fact that something has always and again escaped. Something remains unactualized, inseparable from but unassimilable to any *particular*, functionally anchored perspective' (2002b: 35, emphasis in original). Underlying all modalities of feeling, there is the autonomous field of affect, exceeding closure in concrete utterances or cultural semantics.

Along with the purview of the dynamism of the event, Massumi calls for a semiotics grounded in Deleuze's conception of expression as the *deterritorialization* of language as normative representation.⁷ In order to capture affective encounters the realm of language must expand to incorporate what is other than the linguistic sign—word, designation, manifestation, proposition. In other words, the verbal utterance needs to resonate with a primal event that preceded signification and the division between word and phenomenon, in Deleuze and Guattari's formulation 'a collective assemblage of enunciation,' suggesting 'an impersonal expressive agency that is not restricted to language' (Massumi 2002a: xxi). Massumi exemplifies this 'abstract machine' of expression by referring to Nietzsche's critique of the tendency to subjectify phenomena, separating cause from effect, as if there is always a 'substratum [...] behind doing, effecting, becoming' (quoted by Massumi 2002a: xxiv). However, before 'the seductions of language,' 'process and product are one' in the unity of the pure event (xxiv) such as a strike of lightning, a cry, a dance, a threatening gesture. Massumi develops the notion of 'abstract machine' to explain the ontogenesis of expression as emerging in nonhuman phenomena—the flash of lightning, for instance—which in the continuum of human perception becomes mythologized, for instance, as a property of the Greek god Zeus, further evolving in a variety of mythopoetical

⁷ 'Deterritorialization' can be understood as liberating displacement.

processes until finally narcissistically claimed as personal emotion, as anger or a raging mood: ‘the flash has gone from the expressive to the possessive,’ states Massumi (2002a: xxv). Importantly, the mythic process that rhetorically reduces the field of expression nevertheless retains the primal creativity:

All that expression, is not, it has become. Creative to the last: so generously creative is expression that it agrees to its own conversion. It allows its process to be prolonged into a qualitatively different mode of operation. It flows into rhetorical captivity, possession by a form of content and a form of expression in narcissistic reflection. There is little use in critiquing this ‘annulment’ of expression in a perceptual separation of its product from its process. In one way or another, expression always self-converts upon reaching perception. (2002a: xxv)

In *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, the semiotics of the body within fields of autonomous affect resembles Massumi’s theoretical tracing of the operation of abstract machines. In contrast to what is portrayed as the gossipy monologism of modern storytelling, Lawrence’s novel manifests a sensitive awareness that probes modes of expression exterior to the post-war discourse. Voicing the concerns of many modernist writers affected by the Great War, Joyce, Eliot, Woolf and Hemingway among them, Connie Chatterley in an early chapter reflects on the bankruptcy of language where previously ‘great dynamic words’ such as ‘love, joy, happiness, home, mother, father, husband [...] sex’ have lost their plenitude and become ‘half-dead now, and dying from day to day’ (Lawrence 1993: 62). Again, the complaint concerns the univocality of the utterance, how ‘the great words’ merely function as mundane signifiers, shorn of their creative, resonating potential. Thus, the poetic allusiveness of signification is ‘cancelled for [Connie’s] generation’:

Home was a place you lived in, love was a thing you didn’t fool yourself about, joy was a word you applied to a good Charleston, happiness was a term of hypocrisy you used out of cant, to bluff other people, a father was an individual who enjoyed his own existence, a husband was a man you lived with and kept going, in spirits. As for sex, the last of the great words, it was just a cocktail term for an excitement that bucked you up for a while, then left you more raggy than ever. (Lawrence 1993: 62)

Interestingly, a clothes metaphor clinches this plaintive diagnosis: ‘Frayed! It was as if the very material you were made of was cheap stuff, and was fraying out to nothing’ (62). What once was expressiveness, emerging in the purity of the phenomenal world, has been reduced to

cynical narcissism, retaining no sense of the otherness of language, the impersonal agency that precedes and exceeds subjective signs.

Although a nostalgic mood may be detected here, longing for a lost utopian integrity, the novel proceeds to dramatize expression as a semiotics of the body, that oscillates between primeval yearning and conversions of this yearning in modern idioms. Shortly after the meta-reflections on words, an exemplary scene occurs, involving 'a shock to thought' as Connie in hiding is witness to Mellors washing himself at the back of his cottage, 'naked to the hips, his velveteen breeches slipping down over his slender loins' (Lawrence 1993: 66). Even if the sight seems 'commonplace enough [...] merely a man washing himself!' it overwhelms Connie like a 'visionary experience' and 'in spite of herself' she receives 'the shock of vision in her womb,' affectively apprehending that 'it lay inside her' (66). The vision exceeds the concreteness of Mellors' body, encompassing phenomenal flesh in the purity of its being: Connie gazes at 'a certain beauty of a pure creature,' not any predictable beauty, 'but a certain lambency, the warm white flame of a single life revealing itself in contours that one might touch: a body!' (66). The word 'lambency' suggests Nietzsche's lightning, a pure pre-signifying luminousness, the thing in itself, an autonomous, eventful expression.

It is significant that this vision of primeval flesh *shocks* Connie so that the experience resonates in subsequent perceptions, thoughts and behaviour. What follows can be partly explained by Massumi's observation that in human perception originary expression self-converts into personal emotion and narcissistic rhetoric, that 'expression flows into rhetorical captivity' becoming other to itself, without losing creative force (2002a: xxv). Shortly after the scene of revelation, Connie undresses in front of the bedroom mirror and rather dejectedly views her naked body, grieving over its lack of richness, curviness and roundness, how it has become 'flat, slack, meaningless' (Lawrence 1993: 70). Anatomizing the lacklustre body in terms of normative beauty, the image in the mirror seems tinged with narcissistic desire, prompting only personal emotion, self-pity, resentment, melancholia. However, the episode is more complex than that as it depicts the *affected* body situated in an interactive context that opened it up to creative expression so that 'the coil of confusion' (66) Connie experiences mutates into non-reductive ranges of affect: she 'feels immensely depressed, and hopeless'; she 'hated [the mental life] with a rushing fury'; 'the front of her body made her miserable'; 'she sobbed

bitterly'; 'her bitterness burned a cold indignation against Clifford and his writings and his talk' (70, 71). Although the mood suggests hopeless neglect and betrayal, there is at the same time an affective shift that leads to ethical insight: a phase in what later will be called 'the flux of new awakening' (136), Connie's turmoil triggers an ethico-political stance, an awareness of an oppressive gendered hierarchy, so that her service to her egoistic husband is sensed as 'deep physical injustice [that] burned through her very soul' (71). Further, the necessity of expressing this 'dangerous feeling' of injustice is emphasized, because 'it must have an outlet, or it eats away the one in whom it is aroused' (72). Thus, an implied contrast is drawn between Clifford's repression of war trauma and Connie's empowerment that eventually will give her the courage of effecting liberating change.

Another aspect that the mirror scene highlights is Connie's 'physical intelligence,' a trait she shares with Mellors and indeed with many of Lawrence's characters, not least Rupert Birkin in *Women in Love*. In this novel, the chapter 'Gladiatorial,' depicting the two friends, Birkin and Gerald Crich, wrestle naked in the manner of the Japanese jiu-jitsu, can in many ways be seen to typify the polyvocal body as expressed in, what Lawrence himself called, 'art-speech,' carnal images that seize 'upon the nerves and at the same time [are] pure percepts of the mind and pure terms of spiritual aspirations' (*The Symbolic Meaning* 1962: 18-19). Although the friends discuss methods and strategies at the start, during the struggle, silence reigns and communication is achieved through 'a kind of mutual physical understanding,' that develops rhythmically so that at the climax the flesh of each seems to melt into one mass, 'as if they would break into oneness' (Lawrence 1987: 304). Frailer in body than Gerald, Birkin nevertheless is endowed with *physical intelligence* which intimates 'every motion of the other flesh, converting and counteracting it, playing upon the limbs and trunk of Gerald like some hard wind' (305). In a recent essay, Oana Ruxandra Hritcu dualistically interprets the struggle as the dominance of 'fine intelligence over physical strength' and concludes that the two men complement each other, similar to male-female archetypes (2011: 355). However, the reference is not to superior cognition but to Birkin's *physical* intelligence, which in the affective encounter stands for a mode of empathy, an awareness of, and attentiveness to, 'the invisible body' of the other, to the pains, pleasures, sorrows and desires of the one being acted upon. Even if the men fight to win, Birkin's 'hard wind [...]

entered into the flesh of the fuller man, like some potency,' blurring boundaries of identity, so that the strengths and weaknesses of both intertwine in an image of pure energy, the archetype of pure wrestling, rather than gendered opposites:

So they wrestled swiftly, rapturously, intent and mindless at last, two essential white figures working into a tighter, closer oneness of struggle, with a strange, octopus-like knotting and flashing of limbs in the subdued light of the room; a tense white knot of flesh gripped in silence between the walls of old brown books. (Lawrence 1987: 305)

Tellingly, the 'white knot of flesh' is 'tense,' vibrant in the momentary utopian stasis, then unravelling in the potential for change it created for the two wrestlers. Returning to 'normal consciousness,' Birkin and Gerald's conversation resonates with the 'deep meaning' of the event, a meaning intimated by the loss of identity, which even if it is inscrutable and 'unfinished,' enriches experience.

Indeed, 'the tense white knot,' interlaced with physical intelligence, is an apt metaphor for Connie and Mellors' relationship, and for the manufacture, through them, of an alternative desiring machine. Significantly, after the first satisfying sexual encounter with the gamekeeper, Connie's self-awareness is described as 'the vast *interlaced* intricacy of her body,' a sense of the flesh of the lover meshing with her own, his imprint upon her so tangible that once home she hesitates to take a bath: 'the sense of his flesh touching her, the very stickiness upon her, was dear to hear, and in a sense, holy' (136;137). It is, in fact, by eclipsing social codes and normative identity, that through carnal merger and depersonalized affective flows, Connie and Mellors become lovers and friends. At first, Connie resists the lover's seeming indifference to her selfhood, how 'he never *really* spoke to her' and how his lapses into Derbyshire dialect 'seemed not addressed to her, but some common woman' (127). However, as the relationship develops, it is embodied knowing, the communication between affected bodies, that enables empathy, trust, care and eventually love. Increasingly, it is the 'structure of feeling,' to make use of Raymond Williams formulation, within the lovers' situation that releases them from the vicious circle of the narcissistic culture the novel critiques.⁸

⁸ 'Structures of feeling' is discussed in *Marxism and Literature* (1977). This conception can be seen to be one of the forerunners of contemporary affect theory. Williams emphasizes *feeling* rather than thought, because what is at stake in

Contrary to the ideal of self-sovereignty the dominant culture promotes and the ensuing counterfeit discourse, Connie and Mellors, as we have seen, distrust verbal signifiers, in the early stages of the affair communicating through pre-signifying affect, through hesitant approximations to one another. The first love-making scene, for instance, traces the process of depersonalization, which as Jack Stewart observes about lovers' encounters in *The Rainbow*, frequently is 'the prelude to a transpersonal experience' (1980: 305), effecting 'deep meaning,' even if it is, as in the case of the wrestlers in *Women in Love*, inscrutable and in transit. Fleeing the oppressive presence of her husband, Connie comes to the little hut in the forest in a state of despair, that the narrator defines as 'the agony of her own female forlornness,' then varying the expression to link her condition to the hidden malaise of the times: Connie 'was crying blindly in all the anguish of her generation's forlornness' (Lawrence 1993: 115). This reference to the collective, followed by the lovers' awakening to new potentials, to, as Lawrence states it in 'Back to Bestwood,' 'a new conception of what it means to live' (2004: 23), suggests hopefulness for alienated modernity. In fact, during this first scene of love-making in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Connie is liberated from her entrapment in personal emotion through nuances of touch, first the caress of the new-born chicks in the coops by the hut, then the feel of Mellors' 'fingers on her knee,' 'his hand on her shoulder,' the gentle movement down her back, 'the blind instinctive caress' of her whole body in the dark cabin, 'the soft, groping, helplessly desirous hand touching her body' (Lawrence 1993: 116) and at the time of parting, instead of a handshake, the lover's hands enclosing hers. This choreography of hands makes a kind of fragile intimacy possible, hesitant, instinctive, groping, discovering without willfulness. There is a reciprocal flow of affect between the intertwined bodies, agony, sorrow, fear, compassion, peacefulness, wonder, an indeterminate experience that promises change and renewal.

Because of their physical understanding, that affectively opens them to one another, Connie and Mellors are not driven by a will to power and are not compelled to assert themselves in situations of uncertainty or conflict. Indeed, *waiting* is a behavioral trait of both, specifically associated with Connie as someone receptive to the unknown: 'she was

communal encounters is yet to be fully articulated; at any time in history, various ways of emergent thinking are counter to hegemonic ideology.

born to wait,' claims the narrator, showing her immersed in the natural scene, in the fine rain, soft wind, among the 'dim, twilit, silent and alive' trees, alert and expectant despite the stillness (Lawrence 1993: 123). More actively reflecting on waiting as a state of being, Mellors, at first rashly drawn to Wragby Hall to seek out his lover in the night, comes to terms with his aloneness and how togetherness depends on attending to the other's desire:

it's no good trying to get rid of your own aloneness. You've got to stick to it—all your life. Only at times, at times, the gap will be filled in. At times! But you have to wait for the times. Accept your aloneness and stick to it, all your life. And then accept the times when the gap is filled in, when they come. But they've got to come. You can't force them. (Lawrence 1993: 145)

This capacity to attend to what is uncertain or as yet unknown is in marked contrast to the relationship between Lord Chatterley and his nurse, Mrs Bolton, a miner's widow, who evaluate one another in terms of symbolic identities, of status, class and gender, and as a result are doomed to a master-servant deadlock, underpinned by rigid will, resentment and little cruelties.

Not constrained by social hierarchies and the detrimental emotional states they produce, Connie and Mellors experience a fluid affective range that rarely is trapped in *cul-de-sacs* of dismay, cunning or vengefulness. Even though there are collisions, seemingly caused by social status, the emotions evoked on such occasions are fleeting and ambiguous, anger gliding into good humour and kindness, dislike into confusion, and confusion in turn into curiosity and empathetic wonder. With regard to this emotional fluidity, it is worth noting that contemporary affect theorists often disagree about the extent to which modalities of emotion should be defined and, in Ben Anderson's words, tend to devalue personal qualifications of affective circulations as 'a frictional process—a capture or blockage' (2004: 737). On the other hand, Anderson observes that eclipsing the semantics of affect incurs the danger of eliding harmful excess and ignoring how aggression, domination, violence and cruelty feed into a personal situation. Anderson proposes a relational field of modalities where affect transmutes into different bodies as a mode of feeling, as anger, for instance, shame or boredom, and is variously qualified by emotion as subjective utterance. It is important, though, according to Anderson, to be aware that these relations are 'never self-

contained, or fully self-present in an individual body'; rather they are hybrid processes that 'slide into one another,' imbuing thought with feeling and emotion and modulating the affective register with enabling or constraining expression (2004: 737).

The contrast set up in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* between the narcissistic culture of post-war England and a potential transpersonal regeneration, based in the primeval body, is attuned to how affective situations either constrain and diminish the individuals involved or enable them to tap into processes of liberating change. Thus, in the case of Connie and Mellors, the early encounters are ambiguous, threatening to collapse into angry *ressentiment* against class privilege on the gamekeeper's part, and in turn reinforcing the lady's sense of aristocratic superiority. Taking for granted her right to make use of the hut in the forest, Connie requests a copy of the key, condescending to the keeper as a servant, and thereby unleashing unspoken hostilities, shades of anger and opaque insults. However, because the emotions evoked are supple, tinged with a kind of comic relief in Mellors' mocking use of dialect and Connie's bafflement at his meaning, any dead-lock of the situation is avoided. As in the case of the wrestlers' experience in *Women in Love*, the meaning of the episode is unfinished, excessive to the individual exchange. Indeed, playfulness, not power play, dominates the scene as in parting Mellors' face is shown 'glimmering with wicked laughter' and Connie 'went home in a confusion, not knowing what she thought or felt' (Lawrence 1993: 96).

This supple affective play defines to some extent Connie and Mellors' relationship and prevents it from stagnating in a will to dominate. An even more telling example is the aftermath of their first love-making episode when space is given in the novel to their musings on each other, and in fact to their subjective expressions. The thought processes of both emerge from *affectus*, from affecting and being affected, the situation marked by a premonition of change. Most significantly, their recent physical encounter inspires empathy as Mellors' misgivings about the love affair give way to a delicate sense of the lover's vulnerability and Connie's habitual mindset, influenced by her husband and the Wragby 'minds,' allows for a reevaluation; contrary to the dominant male gaze that defines her as 'Lady Chatterley [...] the hostess, men liked so much, so modest, yet so attentive and aware' (Lawrence 1993: 121), that assigns her a restricted gendered position, Mellors' tactile, sensuous communication seems more truthful and respectful of her humanity. Thinking from the body, the couple

reassess values, distancing themselves from the acquisitive self-assertion of the times, embracing instead transpersonal ethics—mutual respect, kindness, and in Mellors' words, 'the tenderness of life, the tenderness of women, and the natural riches of desire' (Lawrence 1993: 120).

During these scenes of the lovers' insights, the major social critique of the novel is focalized in Mellors' articulation of the modern malaise, the greed-driven dynamo of the industrial nation, the damaged body politic, posited against an alternative desiring machine, a generator of life-sustaining affect, that demands ethically grounded expressions of tenderness, compassion, care, pleasure, grief and courage. In fact, the flexible, empathetic inner speech of the couple anticipates such new expression in an ecological awareness that imbricates the human world in habitats of nature. Thus, according to Mellors, 'the new conception of life' must involve resistance to 'greedy mechanism and mechanized greed' that encroaches on reservoirs of nature, such as the beautiful remnant of Sherwood Forest, and that wills that 'all vulnerable things must perish under the rolling and running of irons' (Lawrence 1993: 119). In particular, Connie's expanding sensibility throughout the novel interfaces with the nonhuman environment, empowering her to rebel against patriarchal oppression. In the next section, I will further examine, what the novel refers to, as 'the flux of new awakening,' Connie's *becoming* as both a reconnection to nature and creative expression of modern femininity.

The Flux of New Awakening

Contextualizing *Lady Chatterley's Lover* within the material cultures of early modernity, David Trotter modifies the prevalent critical assumptions about Lawrence's die-hard primitivism and relentless 'hatred he felt for "our most modern world"' (2013: 90; quoting Lawrence, *Letters*, 5:495), coining the expression 'techno-primitivism' to account for the novelist's more accommodating discourse, the way nature is opened up to 'modern techno-industrial reality' and vice versa, enabling a view of 'the natural *in* the synthetic rather than before and beyond it' (Trotter 2013: 106, emphasis in original). According to Trotter, Connie Chatterley combines most successfully this blend of the organic and the inorganic, for instance, as a nonchalant consumer of modern fashion and a practitioner of modernized archaic forms such as 'the eurhythmic dance-movements' she had learned in Dresden (Trotter 2013: 102). Trotter takes as an example Connie's dance in the rain in homage to Mellors after love-making in the

forest hut, and notes how the ritualistic nostalgia is complicated by the dancer's 'rubber shoes' and by the 'modern beat' of the performance (2013: 102-3). Because the dance occurs as 'a response to yet another of Mellors's rants against the "industrial epoch" and its reduction of men and women to "labour insects"' (2013: 103; quoting Lawrence *LCL* 220), it foregrounds Connie's more effortless—'cool,' as Trotter states it—commingling of expressive forms, archaic and in tune with the times. In fact, Connie, in Trotter's interpretation, 'is modern literature's most fully rendered techno-primitivist' (2013: 107).

My approach to Connie's function in the novel approximates Trotter's but is more concerned with how her subjective expression develops toward a delineation of the 'new embodiment, in a new way' (Lawrence 1987: 59), Rupert Birkin hopes for in *Women in Love*, a transformed being-in-the-world that imbricates the human animal in the 'vast, creative, nonhuman mystery' (Lawrence 1987: 479) of the circumambient cosmos. In *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Connie's awakening, the process of her expanding embodied consciousness and subsequent distancing from the narrow mind-set of her social setting, intersects with natural habitats that challenge her to rely on sensation as a mode to connect with otherness. Before becoming intimate with the gamekeeper, but not long after the visionary glimpse of his nude body, Connie in low spirits wanders into the wood in early spring, prompted by Mrs Bolton's advice to 'look at the daffs behind the keeper's cottage' (Lawrence 1993: 85). Starting out dejectedly, the compact episode depicts an epiphanic experience, echoing William Wordsworth's 'I wandered lonely as a cloud,' where natural beauty eases the poet-speaker's melancholy, surprising him into a sense of belonging, joy and creative expression. Similar to the Wordsworthian speaker, Connie 'gazes and gazes' at the brittle spring-flowers, 'the anemones [...] bobbing their naked white shoulders over crinoline skirts of green,' the little primroses with 'yellow buds undoing themselves,' the daffodils 'rustling and fluttering and shivering so bright and alive' (86).⁹

⁹ I copy the two most relevant stanzas from Wordsworth's poem:

Continuous as the stars that shine
 And twinkle on the milky way,
 They stretched in never-ending line
 Along the margin of a bay:
 Ten thousand saw I at a glance,

Not only sight stimulates the young woman but hearing and smell sharpen so that she 'was strangely excited in the wood' (Lawrence 1993: 86): she listens to the 'cold breaths of wind' and associates its moaning among the tree branches with an attempt 'to tear itself free,' her own dilemma; she smells the 'sweet and cold, sweet and cold' of the primroses and violets and even catches 'the faint tarry scent' of the dancing daffodils (86). Amid the loveliness of the scene, a mode of 'sensitive power' (Lawrence 2004: 23) infuses Connie, so that she imagines herself 'loose and adrift,' like a boat gliding away from its moorings, where it 'had been fastened by a rope, and jaggling and snarring' (Lawrence 1993: 86). Again, echoing the Romantic lyric's voyage from idle restlessness to organic connection, Connie experiences a sense of belonging, of cohabitation with nonhuman nature: with her back against a young pine-tree, she is invigorated by its swaying touch, the 'curious life, elastic and powerful rising up' (86); her own precariousness seems reflected in the delicate wind-tossed daffodils, 'dipping silent' in the chill, 'so strong in their frailty!' (86). 'The spontaneous overflow of feeling' that will in the course of time release mature reflection in Wordsworth's poem will also guide the young lady into 'the current of her proper destiny' (Lawrence 1993: 86), into imaginative decisions that enact life-enhancing change. An indication of her fresh thought arising from the affective flow in nature is Connie's sharp reply to her husband back at Wragby, protesting his jejune view of the daffodils: Cliff's categorial remark that daffodils are as much sustained by 'the air and sunshine' as coming 'out of the earth' does not dampen Connie's wonder at the mysteries of nature: "but they are modelled in the earth," she retorted, with a prompt contradiction that surprised her a little' (Lawrence 1993: 87).

In my opinion, it is noteworthy that 'I wandered lonely as a cloud' serves as an intertext in the forest scene, not primarily because of the Romantic/pastoral connection but because of the poetic language engendered to express the encounter between human culture and non-

Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.
The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

human nature. In fact, poetry saturates this episode as the scenery reminds Connie of ‘endless phrases’ from among others Milton, Swinburne and the ‘Apostles Creed’ and these ‘[sweep] through her consciousness,’ mediating the wondrous beauty around her (Lawrence 1993: 85). Significantly, the way poetic figures here interface with the seemingly raw encounter with nature suggests the novel’s strategies in summoning the inaccessible to human apprehension. Thus, during the various phases of Connie’s ‘new awakening,’ often occurring in erotic rapture with her lover, the tendency to naturalize the female body is complicated by, what I want to call, using Scott Knickerbocker’s conception, ‘sensuous poesis,’ the deliberate use of artifice in order to draw attention to meaning-making as a defining human activity as well as to humbly approach the otherness of natural habitats (2012: 2). The eco-poets Knickerbocker examines in *Ecopoetics: The Language of Nature, the Nature of Language* (2012)—Wallace Stevens, Elizabeth Bishop, Richard Wilbur and Sylvia Plath—do not ‘attempt to erase the artifice of their own poems (to make them seem more natural and supposedly, then, closer to nature), [but ...] unapologetically embrace artifice—not for its own sake, but as a way to relate meaningfully to the natural world. Indeed for them, artifice is natural’ (2012: 2, emphasis in original). Although none of these poets use language mimetically, their confidence in expressiveness, in creative symbol-making, ‘rematerializes language specifically as a response to nonhuman nature,’ simultaneously defamiliarizing and coming close (Knickerbocker 2012: 2).

In the concluding discussion of the essay, I want to suggest that despite its veneer of realistic narrative, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* experiments with a version of *sensuous poesis* to access the invisibility of feminine embodiment, ‘re-bodying’ the affective life of women, not in order to mimetically reflect it, but to configure it as vital to the new heterogeneous body pressing against the phallogocentric images of modern culture.¹⁰

¹⁰ ‘Re-bodying’ is a term frequently used by Becker and Panteleimon (2018) to suggest especially artistic activity that evokes the invisible body and interweaves the evocation into official discourse. Increasingly, feminist critique of Lawrence’s fiction has become aware of the role language and artifice play in problematizing any tendencies to essentialize the female body. An exemplary rather recent essay is Katie Gramich’s ‘Stripping Off the ‘Civilized Body’: Lawrence’s *nostalgie de la boue* in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*’ (2001). Although Gramich refers to Lawrence’s view of the body as ‘unalterable natural essence’ (151), she also notes

Highly relevant here is Lacan's aphorism that 'woman is a symptom of man,' referring to the invisibility of feminine *jouissance* within the realm of the Symbolic, dominated by the phallic imaginary (Seminar XXII, 1974-5). Before her 'awakening,' Connie Chatterley indeed occupied a symptomatic position within the ego-driven culture criticized in the novel, assuming a bogus-identity as 'the hostess men liked so much [...] playing this woman so much, it was almost second nature to her' (Lawrence 1993: 121) and during the intellectual conversations among the Wragby male visitors, sitting 'quiet as a mouse, not to interfere with the immensely important speculations of the highly-mental gentlemen' (35). The fact that her neutral presence is necessary to the men—'she had to be there. They didn't get on so well without her. Their ideas didn't flow so freely'—focalizes the perverse enjoyments of this culture, that narcissistically asserts itself by eliding the potential of feminine intelligence.

In order to weave feminine *jouissance* into the univocal body politic, Lawrence in an exemplary love-making scene in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* dramatizes expression as a polyvocal event, echoing on a larger scale Connie's visionary glimpse of Mellors' transcendent body, now on the level of narration itself. Seeking her lover out in their little sanctuary, the forest hut, after an earlier unresolved quarrel with him, Connie at first reluctantly gives way to Mellors' advances, and even experiences them as threatening, 'afraid of his thin, smooth naked body' (Lawrence 1993: 171), but then is increasingly overtaken by passion which moves her through stages of ecstasy 'till suddenly, in a soft, shuddering convulsion, the quick of all her plasm was touched, the consummation was upon her, and she was gone' (174). The escalation of erotic ecstasy is solely filtered through Connie's perspective, the poetic prose suggesting the flow of affect in descriptions of natural rhythms and processes, picturing the woman as 'rising and heaving' with the dark waves of the ocean, 'heaving with a great swell, so that slowly her whole darkness was in motion, and she was ocean rolling its dark, dumb mass' (Lawrence 1993: 174). After climax, Connie recedes like a wave 'ebbing,' acutely aware of the beauty and joy of love-making, the focus now widening to enclose Mellors' body, awakening 'in her heart the queer wonder of him,' and through touch finding 'unspeakable beauty':

the complicated relationship of both Mellors and Connie to nature and the concomitant critique of phallogocentrism the novel performs.

Beauty! what beauty! a sudden little flame of new awareness went through her. How was it possible, this beauty here, where she had previously only been repelled? The unspeakable beauty to the touch, of the warm, living buttocks! The life within life, the sheer warm potent loveliness. And the strange weight of the balls between his legs! What a mystery! (175)

After these sublime evocations of erotic bliss, the exchanges become more mundane, even humorous, as Connie hopelessly imitates the gamekeeper's dialect, which in turn leads to a conversation about the colloquial naming of the female sexual organ—'cunt'—, Mellors explicating its meaning as

It's thee down there; an' what I get when I'm I'side thee—an' what tha gets when I'm I'side thee—it's a' as it is—all on't! (178)

In Mellors' understanding 'cunt' surpasses the physical organ and the sexual act; 'cunt' connotes the intimacy of lovers, the ecstatic harmony brought about by the expression of feminine *jouissance* as well as the revalued beauty of the male body:

Fuck's only what you do. Animals fuck. But cunt's a lot more than that. It's thee, dost see: an' tha'rt a lot besides an animal, aren't ter?—even ter fuck! Cunt! Eh, that's the beauty o'thee, lass! (178)

I have dwelt on this scene in some detail in order to emphasize how expression is dramatized as an event that leads to potential ruptures of the closures of phallogocentric discourse, imbuing it with the 'deep meaning' of the female body that promises 'a new embodiment,' a non-hierarchical, relational field, bound together by life-enhancing values. The drama here is a dynamic exposition of body-consciousness, starting with Connie's fearful attitude, representative of her generation, dismissive of 'sex, the last of the great words' (Lawrence 1993: 62), feigning pleasure, but agreeing with Lady Bannerley that civilization 'has to help us forget our bodies, and then time passes happily' (Lawrence 1993: 75). However, throughout the scene, expression self-converts so that Connie's initial 'cold and derisive' mind modulates into sadness which ushers her again into 'the current of her proper destiny' (86), her explorations of embodied life in the world. The woman's deepening passion is at first conveyed in mythic terms, in primeval purity, summoned in an archetypal image of a Venus-like creature, emerging from her ocean abode. However, this seeming female essence is made opaque in the poetic tropes of the passage that can be seen to perform *sensuous poesis*, both approaching feminine

pleasure and defamiliarizing it through metaphoric excess. Linguistic artifice dominates the passage as words themselves take center stage, becoming rematerialized in the process of evoking the ecstasies of flesh:

far down inside her the deeps parted and rolled asunder, in long, far-travelling billows, and ever at the quick of her, the depths parted and rolled asunder, from the centre of soft plunging, as the plunger went deeper and deeper, touching lower, and she was deeper and deeper and deeper disclosed, and heavier the billows of her rolled away to some shore, uncovering her. (Lawrence 1993: 174)

'The pleasure of the text' problematizes the mythic figuration, leaving an excess to the woman's experience so that, as so often in Lawrence's affective encounters, 'deep meaning' gathers, promising rich potential for future expressions. One of those potentials is hinted at in the good-natured definition of the taboo word 'cunt,' which Mellors revalues, transforming it into a signifier for embodied love, empowered by feminine pleasure and male reverence.

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