LAWRENCE'S LIQUID LEXICON
AND SIEGMUND'S HEART
IN THE TRESPASSER*

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When D. H. Lawrence in the challenging essay, "We Need One Another," defines a man and a woman as a "flow," a "spray," a "vibration," a "river of life," the images are not metaphors but verbal approximations of palpable energetic movements. The empirical quality of Lawrence's characteristically "liquid" lexicon can be seen, I believe, even in the early and derived work, The Trespasser. After outlining a broad context for my comments, I will closely analyze several crucial facets of that novel.

Three recent studies have each set Lawrence into a particular intellectual background that helps to ground and to illuminate Lawrence's special contributions to our understanding of human nature. The profound influence of materialism on the young Lawrence has been delineated by Daniel Schneider. "In its origins," Schneider points out, "Lawrence's psychology reflects the thinking of tough-minded empiricists and naturalists" such as Charles Darwin and T. H. Huxley.¹ In particular, Herbert Spencer's "central notion of psychic activity as the correlate of physical forces;" Ernst Haeckel's insistence on "the inseparability of chemical and material forces and spiritual or emotional facts;" and

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William James' theory that "the emotions are the body's visceral states," all lie behind Lawrence's intuitive sense of the flowing and rhythmic bio-psychological states inside of, and between, human individuals. His dynamic view of human psychology rooted in natural processes also of course had literary precursors. Roger Ebbatson has detailed how the flux and dynamism of Nature is portrayed in a British literary tradition—including Meredith, Hardy, Forster and others—of which Lawrence's work is the "culmination." "The keynote of Nature in Lawrence," Ebbatson underlines, is "energy and movement." Another scholar, Maria M. Tatar, has suggestively placed Lawrence in one further tradition, that of European writers who were influenced by the "animal magnetism" theories of Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815). The very title of Tatar's study, Spellbound, is a word (along with its variants) one frequently encounters in Lawrence's stories. Tatar asserts that "it is clear that [Lawrence's] psychology of consciousness can be traced to eighteenth century theories of vital energy and anatomical polarity." She notes, however, that those predecessors had left "unrecognized (or at least unacknowledged)" the power of sexual attraction and repulsion that Lawrence was to boldly explore.

Indeed, so central is the sexual experience for Lawrence that Garrett Stewart has even used the phrase "orgastic style" to refer to a unique set of linguistic features in Lawrence's prose: "Repetition, apposition, parataxis, the ambivalences of syntactic elision, the patterns of echo and assonance, the functional shifts of diction within and between phrases, the thrust, swerve, and conversion of imagery—the whole lunging, unstable dynamic of Lawrence's style...[creates] a visceral rhythm that is the furthest development in English of the Romantic rhapsody." Alan Friedman has suggested that Lawrence's style came from his attempt at
“a direct literary rendering of his characters’ unconscious,” through which Lawrence sought “a physical base” for the unconscious. Similarly, in an essay on “character and consciousness” in Lawrence, Sartre and Wilhelm Reich, T. H. Adamowski has pointed out that “the body plays a critical role in their speculations on the self” (my italics). The parallel perceptions of Lawrence and Reich concerning the “physical” or bioenergetic nature of the unconscious are, in fact, extraordinarily extensive, as was shown back in 1956 by David Boadella.

Let us examine now how the unconscious is dealt with in The Trespasser. As Elizabeth Mansfield, the editor of the Cambridge edition, observes: “Already in his second novel, Lawrence was moving toward language which would become his hallmark.” Mansfield aptly contrasts a passage in the first manuscript using rather straightforward but emotionally vague language with the revised version in MS-II, where we read (for example) that Siegmund’s “blood flushed up, and up again, with fire.” Indeed, the Isle of Wight segment abounds with “fire” words, which range from “a soft flame” of tenderness to the “burning and surging” of passionate desire. As in the line Mansfield quotes, “blood” is the vehicle for much of this Lawrencean idiom, directly or indirectly. Blood actually carries heat—hence that earlier line continues, “till all Siegmund was hot blood”—and blood is also a liquid. These two qualities may explain some of Lawrence’s seemingly clumsy mixed images such as “the exquisite flame which flooded him” (53; my italics). Most remarkable is the very Lawrencean perception in a phrase like “his blood, alive and conscious, running towards her” (63; my italics). This phrase is not metaphor; Lawrence’s materialist vision presents us with “another ego” that is as physical as carbon. In chapter VI of The Trespasser, one comes upon an astonishing sentence. Following what
seems like standard novelistic interior dialogue (the words are even placed in quotation marks, a practice Lawrence moved away from in later novels) the narrator states: "It was his physical self thinking." Here indeed we encounter the fundamental Lawrencian vision. Let us examine three aspects of that vision in this novel: the central role of Siegmund's heart; his feelings of cosmic harmony; and, his suicide.

The word "heart" appears in a vast number of English idioms. The lexicographer L. P. Smith in the 1920's included 66 such phrases mentioning the heart (and there are at least a dozen others) in his listing of what he called "bodily" or "somatic" idioms—that is, idiomatic phrases or word usages that include a body part: "arm," "leg," etc.\textsuperscript{11} In English the largest groups of idioms refer to the head, the hand, and the heart. The heart is thought of by English-speaking people as the source, or at least the location of emotion. Idioms using other visceral words such as liver, spleen, bowels and so on are few and infrequently used in modern English; and English lacks altogether any single equivalent for hara (roughly, "belly"), which figures so prominently in Japanese somatic idioms.

In phrases like "his heart sank," Lawrence follows ordinary idiomatic usage. However, narrative uses of the word heart are exceptionally frequent in \textit{The Trespasser}, and most important of all, Lawrence specifically and concretely focusses our attention on Siegmund's actual heart. The first day of his holiday on the train out of Newport, Siegmund's outward feeling is one of "intoxication...dying out" while inwardly, "beneath his stupor his heart was thudding heavily with excitement" (56-7). Unexpectedly seeing Helena waiting for him one station early, Siegmund's heart "leapt up, wrenching wildly." As he embraces her, "he laughed in his heart." Throughout their five days together, Siegmund's joy—and
also his tragedy—will be registered via his heart.

Several key scenes are knit together with references to his heart. First, let’s look at the oft-quoted moment when Helena and Siegmund kiss in “the long, supreme kiss, in which man and woman have one being” (64). Even Helena’s heart is here described as “like a fire in her breast,” as “at the mouth they seemed to melt and fuse together.” But the kiss exhausts her. “She had not the man’s brightness and vividness of blood”—a key measure in Lawrence’s lexicon of aliveness. Although she lays listening to Siegmund’s “heavily-beating heart,” she “sank away from his caresses,” “subtly drew back from him.” This withdrawal of energy and contact, though “subtle” is a clear psychological message which the honorable Siegmund “yields to,” suppressing his passion: “his heart sank, his blood grew sullen....” Helena goes on to complain that her feet are cold: and one can only comment on how Lawrence here deftly concretizes the somatic idiom, “to have cold feet.”

The movements of Helena and Siegmund here, as throughout the novel, are plasmatic; they are simultaneously biological and psychological; they are movements of the life energy. Freud long ago used the metaphor of the movements of an amoeba in discussing the extension and retraction of the “libido.” His protege Wilhelm Reich eventually split away from psychoanalysis because he felt (and demonstrated scientifically12) that the image could be and should be understood literally: all living things actually do expand and contract in a manner precisely the same as that of the amoeba.

The beating of the human heart is also a pulsatory process of expansion and contraction. During another scene of closeness, a whole paragraph is given to Helena’s awareness of Siegmund’s beating heart. “The throb was strong and deep. It seemed to go through the whole
island, and the whole afternoon...” (79). And Helena wonders if “deep in the world [there is] a great God thudding out waves of life, like a great Heart, unconscious.” But Helena’s response is to try to avoid the actuality of this physical life as she struggles to hear in her imagination what she calls “Siegmund’s soul.” Then, on their fourth day, Helena breaks down hysterically in her rejection of Siegmund’s heart, which is identified with his body, his sexuality, and all physical life: “The secret thud, thud of his heart, the very self of that animal in him she feared and hated, repulsed her. She struggled to escape...his brute embrace.” (126). It is a powerful scene, as Helena “shudders with horror” repeatedly, “grows frantic,” “fights against him,” “thrusts her hands in his chest,” pushes him “furiously away,” turns away “convulsively,” covers her ears, “winces.” This total physical rejection breaks Siegmund. “Saying in his heart, ‘It is enough,’” Siegmund prostrates himself against the ground, holding his breath to cut off his feelings in a near-catatonic state, from which Helena only with difficulty—and because a passerby happens to come along—manages to pull him back. The night draws to an end with a huge gulf between them, “his heart...certain of calamity.”

Typical of his masochistic passivity, Siegmund refuses to complain about Helena’s behavior. He turns aside her attempt at apology by saying, “‘It’s not you,’” while “in his heart” (146) blames himself. Later, on the train back to London, Siegmund puzzles over being unable even then to understand Helena; he was “tortured with the problem of her till it became acute, and he felt as if his heart would burst inside of him” (155). And then Siegmund’s poor heart is tortured more at home. Over and over in the later chapters he is described as “shrinking” (the amoeba contracting against pain), “scarcely breathing,” “stiff and unmoving,”
while all the time feeling "sick at heart." With several levels of irony, Siegmund's thoughts shortly before he kills himself revolve around "the heart of life," which he concludes is "kind" because it does not "explain" and is thus "implacable," "pitiless" and "stern"—the desperate rationalizations of his final alienation.

Before discussing the suicide, let me look at one other aspect of Siegmund's experience on Wight—his discovery of cosmic harmony. Ebbatson suggests that "the deepest relationship into which Siegmund is initiated is not with Helena but with the effulgent natural world of the island..." Still, Siegmund's feeling of unity with nature ebbs and flows. Specific factors are involved in that rhythm. To begin with, the 5-day holiday provides a big release from the chronic tension of Siegmund's daily life in a "drab and dreary" home. "For years, he had suppressed his soul, in a kind of mechanical despair doing his duty and enduring the rest" (49). This suppression of course held down his vital energy from expanding. Reich termed this kind of emotional blocking process "armoring." The armor has simultaneous physical and psychological aspects, that is, in the body itself and in the character. Siegmund's dutiful character and his stifled body each reflect the armor his vitality is encased in. But then the holiday: "Now he was going to break free altogether, to have at least a few days purely for his own joy" (49). After the last concert is over and Siegmund sits in the train home, outwardly he is motionless but "he felt busy within him a strong activity," and he was "trembling in all his being." As the train moves through the "full, luminous night," Siegmund "quivers" with anticipation. These verbs of subtle energetic movement like 'quiver' and 'tremble' are another crucial element in Lawrence's lexicon. Among others, we can list 'tingle,' 'vibrate,' 'melt,' 'fuse,' along with some of the
stronger words already mentioned, 'laugh,' 'leap,' 'blaze up,' 'flush up,' 'burn,' 'surge,' 'burst' and so on; plus the contractive expressions, 'sink,' 'sink away,' 'coil,' 'recoil,' 'grow sullen,' 'grow heavy' and so on.

At first, the new expansion of Siegmund's energy out from under his armor leads to feelings of joyous cosmic harmony. Immediately upon reaching the coast, "the day flashed out, and Siegmund mated with joy" (55). On board the little ship departing for Wight, Siegmund "gave himself to the breeze and to the sea...as if he were a part of it all. All his body radiated...." The first night, after some sort of passionate experience with Helena indicated by an ellipsis in the text that I interpret as intercourse, Siegmund's "volcanic" state of the previous hour is turned to a "new soft beauty." He becomes filled with an "easiness" and "simplicity of happiness" that he expresses verbally as a oneness with the natural world: "'the sea seems to be poured out of the moon, and rocking in the hands of the coast. They are all one...'" (70). That such harmony is rooted in sexual pleasure is explicit in a later passage: "In them, the sea and the sky and the ships had mingled and bred new blossoms of the torrid heat of their love" (93). Similarly, the passage quoted earlier where Helena identifies the beating of Siegmund's heart with "the whole island, the whole afternoon" expresses a "mingled" moment of cosmic fusion. On the morning of the last day of this brief holiday, which he later calls "the only real happiness I have ever known," Siegmund feels acutely "the affection that existed between him and everything" (133). That evening, he is "warmed with sudden love for the earth" (164) and he feels awe as "the night gathers everything into a oneness." But the prospect of losing this beatific experience once back at home demoralizes him: "The Island would be gone tomorrow: he would look for the beauty and find the dirt: what was he to do?" (145).
There are two basic reasons, I think, why Siegmund is unable to sustain his sudden new state of expanded life experience. One is Helena, and the quality of their relationship. Just as Helena discovers the real Siegmund of "clay" is different from the Siegmund who is "a projection of her soul," so the actual Helena is not the life-giver Siegmund idealizes her to be, but a woman in flight from living contact. Her vital energy is bound tightly in her head, in her habitual fantasizing, and at best she can only "sacrifice" her body to Siegmund's passion; thus, even after one of the closest moments, she manages to feel only "something" of the harmony he feels (70). Moreover, she eventually freaks out in the hysterical scene discussed earlier. That rejection leaves a "secretly bleeding wound" in Siegmund, a "hemorrhage of self-esteem [that] tortured him to the end" (144). Nonetheless, there had been one occasion where both were in harmony with each other and with nature, expressed in poignantly lovely prose: "Amidst the journeying of oceans and clouds and the circling flight of heavy spheres lost to sight in the sky, Siegmund and Helena, two grains of life in the vast movement, were travelling a moment side by side" (78). How sad that it was but momentary for them.

And then, the second factor as to why Siegmund cannot sustain such pleasant expansion and harmony is he himself, his armoring. Responding to Rousseau's famous observation that man is born free but yet everywhere he is in chains, Reich pointed out that our armored fear of natural plasmatic streamings in our bodies constitutes a trap. Though all long to be free, spontaneous and natural, few can yield to the unimpeded flow of vital energy. And Siegmund is indeed "man in the trap," as reflected in his image of "this prison corridor of life" (202). Faced with the possibility of continuing—somehow—to live more joyfully, more sexually fulfilled, more at-one with the cosmos, Siegmund does not—maybe I
should say cannot—allow himself to. Biologically, his body back at home becomes “shrinking,” “set hard,” “shut,” “clenched,” “sick,” “flaccid,” “moveless”—a contracted state so extreme that Siegmund sits for long periods “almost without breathing” (189). Psychologically, Siegmund's thought process is moralistically and rigidly narrow (the “prison corridor”), a grossly either/or bind in which Siegmund can only imagine neither/nor: “He could not break with Helena and return to a degrading life at home; he could not leave his children and go to Helena” (202). In a tragically apt image, the narrator expresses Siegmund’s biopsychological trap thus: “Like a man tangled up in a rope, he was not strong enough to free himself” (202). So he decides to hang himself.

John Worthen has commented, “The suicidal in literature is the ultimate assertion of the individual’s alienation from society, from family, finally from the body itself.”13 With these I would also add alienation from the cosmos. Just before his self-murder, Siegmund feels “as if he were a limb out of joint from the body of life” (201). This phrase, “body of life,” connects together living Nature, the human body, and in this context Siegmund’s particular body. The connection is through the living energy, the “vivifier” as Lawrence calls it in his poem, “The Spiral Flame.” Or, in the well-known words of William Blake, “Energy is the only life, and is from the body....Energy is Eternal Delight.” In fact, one of the specific pleasures that Siegmund discovers almost immediately on commencing his holiday is a delight in his own body. “I am at my best, at my strongest,” he thinks while looking at his “whole handsome maturity, the full plating of his breasts, the full thigh...” (74). Returning to Helena from a morning swim, he appears “radiant” and “teeming with life” (76).

Later, the doppelganger named Hampson, looking over Siegmund's
"easy, mature figure and strong throat" (111), observes to him however that "your neck is thick with compressed life" (113)—an important clue concerning Siegmund's suicide, after which we are told the grisly but significant detail that the buckle of the strap was "bedded in Siegmund's neck." Hampson's observation has always reminded me of the idiom, "bottleneck," and the related phrase, "bottled-up anger." A friend of mine once commented that "suicide is always an angry act," a hypothesis well-supported in the psychological literature. Self-described as a "moral coward," Siegmund is a passive-aggressive character who rarely if ever expresses anger or other assertive feelings; "I can't bear to compel anything for fear of hurting it," he states, adding "so I'm always pushed this way and that, like a fool" (131). His suicide surely expresses, at last, some pushing back.

At the same time, Freud's theory of suicide as self-punishment seems applicable also, given Siegmund's strong sense of guilt. In a related theory, the psychotherapist Arthur Janov has suggested that suicide is an attempt to destroy "the unreal self," which is actually disliked rather than the entire person—which one is, paradoxically, trying to protect through the suicidal act.¹⁴ Janov also believes suicide arises not from a true wish to die but from "the feeling of not knowing what else to do" to resolve psychological conflicts: clearly reflected in Siegmund's idea that the two "impossible" alternatives in his future leave him no door out but death. Yet again we must observe that Siegmund's suicide occurs after the great energetic expansion on the Isle of Wight, followed by the collapse (the total "compression") of his life energy at home. Precisely such abrupt psychological change as Siegmund experienced, Reich described as potentially very dangerous: whenever an armored organism experiences a flood-like release of its energy, which in itself is
pleasurable, the unaccustomed body most likely will contract again more severely—in many cases leading to psychosis or suicide.

Siegmund's son, Frank, complains about his "slinking back in a funk" (192). Coincidentally, Lawrence would write many years later an important essay with that word in the title: "The State of Funk." The mature Lawrence there articulates his role as a novelist in these terms: "My field is to know the feelings inside a man, and to make new feelings conscious. What really torments civilized people is that they are full of feelings they know nothing about; they can't realize them, they can't fulfill them, they can't live them. And so they are tortured. It is like having energy you can't use—it destroys. And feelings are a form of vital energy." It is the tingling, trembling, burning, surging, delightful vital energy he didn't "use" that tortured and ultimately destroyed Siegmund MacNair.

NOTES
2 Ibid., pp. 13; 17; 20.
8 David Boadella, The Spiral Flame: A Study in the Meaning of D. H. Lawrence (Nottingham: Ritter Press, 1956; reprinted as issue #50-51 of Paunch [December
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12 Besides Reich's own numerous publications, see especially the following two books by James DeMeo and references therein: *Bibliography on Orgone Biophysics* (El Cerrito, California: Natural Energy Works, 1986) and *The Orgone Accumulator Handbook* (El Cerrito, California: Natural Energy Works, 1989).

