

# Shapes of Openness



Shapes of Openness:  
Bakhtin, Lawrence, Laughter

By

Matthew Leone

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P U B L I S H I N G

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*Mille grazie.*

# ABBREVIATIONS

## Works by and about M.M. Bakhtin

### 1. Anthologies and Secondary Sources

- AA     *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*. Eds. Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov. Trans. and Notes Vadim Liapunov. Austin: U of Texas P, 1990.
- DI     *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: U of Texas P, 1981.
- MB     *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics*. Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1990.
- SG     *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Eds. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Trans. Vern W. McGee. Austin: U of Texas P, 1986.

### 2. Individual Works

- AiG     "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity." AA 4-257.
- BSHR    "The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historical Topology of the Novel)." SG 10-59.
- DiN     "Discourse in the Novel." DI 259-422.
- EaN     "Epic and Novel." DI 3-40.
- FTC     "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes Toward a Historical Poetics." DI 84-258.
- IiO     "Art and Answerability." AA 1-3.
- KFP     "K Filosofii postupka" [Toward a Philosophy of the Act]. Selections translated in MB.
- MHS     "Toward a Methodology of the Human Sciences." SG 159-72.
- N70-71  "From Notes Made in 1970-71." SG 132-58.
- PDP     *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* [the 1963 edition of the Dostoevsky book]. Ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1984.



- PS "Problema soderzhaniia, materiala, i formy v slovesnom khudozhestvennom tvorchestve" [The Problem of content, material, and form in verbal art]. Selections translated in MB.
- PT "The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis." SG 103-31.
- RAHW *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helene Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984.
- RQ "Response to a Question from the *Novyi Mir* Editorial Staff." SG 1-9.
- TRDB "Toward a Reworking of the Dostoevsky Book." PDP 283-302.

### Works by and about D.H. Lawrence

- A II "Apocalypsis II." *Apocalypse*. Ed. Mara Kalnins. New York: Viking, 1982.
- AR *Aaron's Rod*. Ed. Mara Kalnins. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988.
- CD *The Captain's Doll. D.H. Lawrence: Four Short Novels*. New York: Viking, 1965.
- CL The Cambridge Edition of *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence*. Gen. Ed. James T. Boulton. 8 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1979-2000.
- CP *The Complete Poems of D.H. Lawrence*. Eds. Vivian de Sola Pinto and F. Warren Roberts. New York: Viking, 1971.
- DHLN *D.H. Lawrence: Novelist*. F.R. Leavis. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964.
- EP *Etruscan Places*. New York: Viking, 1960.
- Fantasia *Fantasia of the Unconscious*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1971.
- K *Kangaroo*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1972.
- LC *Lawrence and Comedy*. Eds. Paul Eggert and John Worthen. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996.
- Letters *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence*. New York: Viking, 1932.
- Man "The Man Who Loved Islands." *The Complete Short Stories*. 3 vols. New York: Viking, 1961.
- P *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers*. 1936. Ed. Edward D. McDonald. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1968.
- P II *Phoenix II: Uncollected, Unpublished, and Other Prose Works by D.H. Lawrence*. Eds. Warren Roberts and Harry T. Moore. New York: Viking, 1970.

- PhilPot *A Philosophy of Potentiality*. Leone Vivante. London, Routledge, 1955.
- Psychoanalysis *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious. Fantasia of the Unconscious*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1971.
- Rainbow *The Rainbow*. Ed. Mark Kinkead-Weekes. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989.
- Rethinking *Rethinking Lawrence*. Ed. Keith Brown. Philadelphia: Milton Keynes, 1990.
- SCAL *Studies in Classic American Literature*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1971.
- SE *Selected Essays*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1972.
- Sea *Sea and Sardinia*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1971.
- StM *St. Mawr and Other Stories*. Ed. Brian Finney. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983.
- WL *Women in Love*. Eds. David Farmer, Lindeth Vasey, and John Worthen. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987.

# CHAPTER ONE

## GLOSSARY OF INDISTINCTIONS

All is two, all is not one. That's the point. That's the secret of secrets. You've got to build a new world on that, if you build one at all. All is two, all is not one. In the beginning, all was two. The one is the result, that which is created is One. That's the result, the consummation. But the beginning is two, it is not one.

—D.H. Lawrence<sup>1</sup>

Unity not as innate one-and-only, but as a dialogic *concordance* of unmerged twos or multiples.

—M.M. Bakhtin (TRDB 289)

### 1. The "Between"

If a Bakhtinian approach to Lawrence's fiction seems apt, it is because of the compatibilities of Lawrence and Bakhtin as philosophers of potentiality. In their ideologies in which being is becoming, both writers necessarily direct attention to the sphere of the "between," or to threshold or boundary phenomena, where categorical distinctions between what is and what is about to be do not exist. Their concern is with context, and the flux of change. As Bakhtin notes, "The word lives, as it were, on the boundary between its own context and another, alien context" (DiN 284). Or, "Language lives only in the dialogic interaction of those who make use of it" (PDP 183). Bakhtin is interested in language not as *langue* (nor as *parole* simply as instantiation of *langue*), but rather in its betweenness as "living" conversation. Lawrence frames a similar interest in the "living" "betweenness" of language in terms of an aesthetics of "relatedness." The "business of art," he claims, is to reveal "the relation between man and his circumambient universe, at the living moment" (P 527).

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<sup>1</sup> From a manuscript of the Hardy study, in Stephen Miko, *Towards Women in Love: The Emergence of a Lawrentian Aesthetic* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1972) 268-69.

Bakhtin and Lawrence reconceive language and art ("utterance") as boundary or threshold phenomena. They deliberately blur conventional distinctions of all sorts, between self and other, conception and realization, text and context, art and life.<sup>2</sup> In their study of interactive dynamics, both grope toward what Lawrence admitted to be highly provisional terms of a "science of life" (EP 82).<sup>3</sup> His vision is of interanimating or dialogic vitalities. Again and again he attempts to reimagine Genesis. Of the Etruscan cosmos, for example, he speculates:

The whole thing was alive, and had a great soul, or *anima*: and in spite of one great soul, there were myriad roving, lesser souls; every man, every creature and tree and lake and mountain and stream, was animate, had its own peculiar consciousness. And has it today. (EP 82-83)

Lawrence's cosmology grandly blurs ordinary "scientific" distinctions between animacy and inanimacy, and does so in the characteristically unguarded way that has brought down much scorn upon him as a primitive or retrograde thinker. Bakhtin (to my knowledge) has never been accused of primitivism, but he nevertheless makes a similarly animistic distinction, or indistinction: "perhaps not only animals, but trees and grass also witness and judge . . ." (N 70-71, 137).

Interanimacy appears to be crucial to the dialogic imagination. Lawrence's and Bakhtin's cosmic vision is of unity in the multiplicity of living dialogic relationships. Bakhtin variously contemplates the possibility of "open unity," or "open totality" (RQ 6-7), while Lawrence recurrently rewrites Genesis to fit his dialogic or Heraclitean proclivities: "Earth and waters lay side by side, together, and utterly different" (EP 84). "Earth" and "water" in this instance are his objective correlatives for a dialogic vision of Genesis, described elsewhere more abstractly by saying, "In the beginning, all was two. The one is the result, that which is created is One." For Lawrence, interactive "two-ness" is "the secret of secrets."<sup>4</sup> Two obviously is the minimum requirement for the genesis of a dialogic cosmos.

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<sup>2</sup> Doherty observes that "Lawrence frequently practices this strategic overturning of categories" in "White Mythologies: D.H. Lawrence and the Deconstructive Turn." *Criticism* 29.4 (1987) 481.

<sup>3</sup> "I believe I am only trying to stammer out the first terms of a forgotten knowledge" (Fantasia 14).

<sup>4</sup> From a manuscript of the Hardy study, in Stephen Miko, *Towards* 268-69.

The resultant primordial oneness of "that which is created," as Lawrence has it, is again split into two by the introduction of consciousness into the cosmos:

The universe, which was a single aliveness with a single soul, instantly changed, the moment you thought of it, and became a dual creature with two souls, fiery and watery, forever mingling and rushing apart, and held by the great aliveness of the universe in an ultimate equilibrium. . . . And everything was dual, or contained its own duality, forever mingling or rushing apart. (EP 84)

Lawrence is not opposed to "thought," which is here associated with a dialogic (or creative-oppositional) consciousness itself, despite what detractors like Eliot have made of his "ignorance."<sup>5</sup> Rather, his point is that duality arises naturally from the reality of consciousness in the cosmos, and that thought (as consciousness) is an epiphenomenon, or an incidental effect of being in the world that needs to be taken into account as such in any epistemology. Lawrence favors epistemologies that do so, such as the Heraclitean, and disfavors those that do not, or that reverse priorities, such as the Platonic idealistic.

He would find abundant reason to favor Bakhtin in this regard. When Lawrence remarks that the universe "instantly changed, the moment you thought of it, and became a dual creature," he shows a sensitivity to the effects of observation upon its object that has an affinity to the then newly formulated Heisenberg uncertainty principle, as well as to aspects of Einsteinian thought in the physical sciences.<sup>6</sup> Bakhtin makes a remarkably similar point:

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<sup>5</sup> See in its entirety Eliot's preface to William Tiverton's *D.H. Lawrence and Human Existence* (London: Rockliff, 1951).

<sup>6</sup> Lawrence is "very pleased with Mr. Einstein for knocking that external axis out of the universe. The universe isn't a spinning wheel. It is a cloud of bees flying and veering round. Thank goodness for that, for we were getting drunk on the spinning wheel."

"So that now the universe has escaped from the pin which was pushed through it . . . the multiple universe flies its own course quite free, and hasn't got any hub, we can hope also to escape" (Fantasia 25). Lawrence's chaotic-dialogical cosmology is quite evident in this "appreciation" of Einstein, however homespun the terms. The appreciation is of multiplicity as in its own way a unifying conception, and of freedom from a "monological" or Newtonian mechanical view of the cosmos, in which accident or unfinalizability as a potential for newness is impossible. Lawrence appreciates Einstein for giving him a cosmos in which everything is "between" or relative to everything else, and there is no fixity.

The Witness and the Judge. When consciousness appeared in the world (in existence) . . . the world (existence) changed radically. A stone is still stony and the sun still sunny, but the event of existence as a whole (unfinalized) becomes completely different because a new and major character in the event appears for the first time on the scene of earthly existence—the witness and the judge. And the sun, while remaining physically the same, has changed because it has begun to be cognized by the witness and the judge. It has stopped simply being and has started being in itself and for itself (these categories appear for the first time here) as well as for the other. . . . [T]his has caused it to change radically, to be enriched and transformed. (N 70-71, 137)

For Lawrence even more radically there is the conviction that the "need for life to be rooted in the cosmos is not one-sided."<sup>7</sup> Not only is the "cosmos . . . certainly conscious" (A II, 172), but "the whole cosmos would wear out and disintegrate if it did not rest and find renewal in the quick center of creative life in individual creatures." Or, "even the sun . . . depends on the dynamic of the soul-impulse in individual creatures" (Fantasia 131).

In the dialogic conception of unity or coherence, everything that is cognizable is interconnected, interanimating—all things in consciousness can potentially engage the other in "living conversation." For anything to fall out of conversational or dialogical potential connection with another is to fall out of life, out of reality. As Bakhtin puts it, "question and answer" (as constitutive of dialogic interaction) are not categorically distinct. Instead, "any response gives rise to a new question" (MHS 168). And "languages become implicated in each other and mutually animate each other" (DiN 410). Discourse is a complex, vital two-way street. Were this not so, individuals would fall out of "living" connection or "conversation," not only with each other as distinct personalities, but also with what Lawrence terms the entire "circumambient universe."

Indeed, Lawrence's view of the dialogic web of "question and answer" is cosmic. Not only is "a man's soul a perpetual call and answer," so is all "life," the whole universe "Call and Answer": "So it is forever, the eternal weaving of calls and answers, and the fabric of life woven and perishing again" (K 295-6).

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Compare Bakhtin's: "The unity of the Einsteinian world is more complex and profound than that of the Newtonian world, it is a unity of a higher order (a qualitatively different unity)" (TRDB 298).

<sup>7</sup> F.R. Leavis, *Thought, Words and Creativity: Art and Thought in Lawrence* (London: Chatto, 1976) 45.

The central positivity in his dynamic of doubt (or faith) is that the dialogic nature of reality is indestructible: "But the calls never cease, and the answers never fail for long" (K 296). Lawrence is ultimately affirmative because he believes it is finally impossible to fall out of dialogue with a living "God," for an individual or a people, alive to their own openness, to fall out of dialogic connection with all else: "In the center of your being . . . do not groan./ For perhaps the greatest of all illusions/ is this illusion of the death of the undying" ("Stoic," CP 703).

Lawrence obviously claims greater poetic license than does Bakhtin in the bold and sweeping style of his affirmations. Lawrence has a flamboyance characteristic of his embattled innocence, and of a religiosity that is obviously more active and eager, or at least more inflamed, than Bakhtin's. Yet even in an atmosphere of official and highly repressive atheism, Bakhtin throughout his career interests himself in a kind of "unity of style" in artistic expression that is conditioned by "a religious confidence or faith in the fact that life is not solitary, that it is intent and does not proceed from within itself in an axiological void" (AiG 202). Bakhtin, perhaps to as great an extent as is Lawrence, is vitalistic. He was clearly influenced by Vladimir Vernadsky, who, as a founder of geochemistry and biogeochemistry, lectured extensively on "the wholeness and connectedness of the cosmos" (SG 156n).<sup>8</sup>

In the context of present concerns, the interest is not in Bakhtin's and Lawrence's "animistic" or vitalistic tendencies per se, but rather, in why both thinkers should feel compelled to extend their beliefs in the interconnectedness of consciousness and the cosmos as far as they do. In this regard, several suggestions are in order. It would appear that fundamental to the dialogism that both writers share are, preliminarily at least, three tenets:

- (1) that "life is *always* individual, and never controlled by one law, one God" (Fantasia 131);
- (2) that individual sentences collaboratively (dialogically) undertake the work of integrity (or of momentarily forging unity in multiplicity) as a project, not as a given; and
- (3) that language, particularly in its prosaic or multi-voiced evocations, is the truest means of dialogic understanding.

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<sup>8</sup> Vernadsky's "Paris lectures in the early 1920s on what he called the 'biosphere' influenced Teilhard de Chardin" (SG 156n).

Taken in order, and in greater detail, Lawrence's and Bakhtin's shared "betweennesses" involve:

(1) *That "life is always individual, and never controlled by one law, one God"* (Fantasia 131). Lawrence unfailingly insists on the individuality of all life: "Each human self is single, incommutable, and unique. This is its *first* reality" ("Democracy," SE 90). Bakhtin is equally insistent: "Science, above all philosophy, can and should study the specific form and function of individuality" (PT 108). Emphasis on individuality is a way for both men to avoid the falsification of abstraction when studying the "science of life." Both abhor systematizing abstraction, particularly of the sort that would "monologize" or rationalize being:

Our life, our being depends upon the incalculable issue from the central Mystery into indefinable *presence*. This sounds in itself an abstraction. But not so. It is rather the perfect absence of abstraction. The central Mystery is no generalized abstraction. It is each man's primal original soul or self, within him. And *presence* is nothing mystic or ghostly. On the contrary. It is the actual man present before us. The fact that an actual man present before us is an inscrutable and incarnate Mystery, untranslatable, this is the fact upon which any great scheme of social life must be based. It is the fact of *otherness*. ("Democracy," SE 90)

In both men the fact of individuality makes for a vision of a cosmos as myriad othernesses, dappled, multi-form (not uniform), unfinalizably diverse, potentially chaotic, clustering and unclustering around cynosures of consciousness, "acts of attention," or individual projects of integrity. The self, furthermore, in this conception, is a "speckled leopard of the mixed self" (P 262). It is connected to othernesses within and without. Like Whitman's "self," it is large, and contains multitudes.<sup>9</sup>

In its expansiveness, such a "self" is fundamentally noncoincident with itself, or with that aspect of itself one might call the isolated ego, or, to repeat Lawrence's formulation: an "actual man present before us is an inscrutable and incarnate Mystery." For Bakhtin, "self" similarly has an

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<sup>9</sup> As John observes, Lawrence made a study of the "creative whole self" in the works of Blake, Coleridge, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Carpenter, Carlyle and Whitman. *Supreme Fictions* (McGill-Queens UP, 1974) 254. Lawrence scrutinizes Whitman's expansive self in SCAL. Later, in "The Business of Art," this chapter will return to what John calls the "vitalist vision" of the "dynamic fabricating self" in Lawrence (*Supreme Fictions* 13).



unfinalizability or inclusiveness that manifests itself as "voices": "But I hear *voices* in everything and dialogic relations among them" (MHS 169).

Tone is an essential feature of every speech-act for Bakhtin because it is tone that registers newness and individuality of expression:

Emotional-volitional tone opens up the locked-in, self-sufficient content of a thought, attaches it to a unified and singular being-event. Every generally signifying value becomes truly signifying only in an individual context. (KFP 108-9; MB 133-34)

Tone is the "imprint of individuality" in speech. It is a phenomenon of infinite variety and multiplicity, impervious to systematization or "theoretism." And while Bakhtin notes that the "ambiguity of language" would permit transcription of individuality as tone into "theoretical terms," inevitably by so doing "we will end up with an empty formula" (KFP 111; MB 134).

Context (or what is often termed connotation) is a palimpsest of tonal individuality. Any utterance:

. . . reveals to us many half-concealed or completely concealed words of others with varying degrees of foreignness. Therefore, the utterance appears to be furrowed with distant and barely audible echoes of changes of speech subjects and dialogic overtones, greatly weakened utterance boundaries that are completely permeable to the author's expression. (SG 93)

"Differences" inherent in the word ("after all, there are no words that belong to no one" [PT 121-22]) do not drain meaning. For Bakhtin, they enrich it with interanimating vitalities. Each word has an internal dialogism; it accrues a "stylistic aura" of recollected earlier contexts (SG 87-8): "This aura is, in fact, the effect of manifold voices that do not reduce to unity or yield a center" (MB 138-39).

Bakhtin's famous notion of heteroglossia clearly has its foundation in a conception of multiplicity that also derives primarily from irreducible individuality. Language, as Bakhtin is fond of stating, is always *languages*. The interest is not only in conventional linguistic dialects or jargons, but more importantly in "languages" within the centralized tongue that reflect cultural and social multiplicity, a carnival of intersubjective riches. At the core of tonal and heteroglossic variety is a vitality that inheres in individual consciousness. Discourse is always a matter of a unique "living impulse" in the speaker toward the object (DiN 292).

Dialogic expression for Bakhtin, like Lawrence, is always the manifold utterance of "the mixed self" (P 262).

(2) *That individual sentences collaboratively (dialogically) undertake the work of integrity (or of momentarily forging unity in multiplicity) as a project, not as a given.* While multiplicity as the reality of discrete individuality is always potentially chaotic, it is, both in individual consciousness and in the socio-historical sphere, ultimately not so. That there is integrity or unity of being is a constant source of admiring wonder for both writers, and a cynosure of their affirmative beliefs. Immanent in manifold reality is an active organizing principle, one that Lawrence usually refers to as "soul": "The whole [cosmos] was alive, and had a great soul, or *anima*" (EP 82). His cosmos has "a" soul, but its oneness is not reductive or uniform. Rather, such an *anima* partakes of a Bakhtinian vision of unity as "open," or as a "unity" "not as an innate one-and-only, but as a dialogic *concordance* of unmerged twos and multiples" (TRDB 289; italics his).

There is unity in multiplicity, but that unity is of a special sort. For Bakhtin and Lawrence it is not "monologic." Dialogic unity is a vision of interconnectedness, interanimation, or conversation among voices. Voices may be in disagreement, as those who construe the dialogic to be endless debate exclusively seem to think, but more characteristically they are the voices of *agreement* or shared correspondences. For Bakhtin dialogue in this special sense is an "open unity" (RQ 6).

The dialogic imagination has a conception of creative chaos as the reality of unfinalizability, as active possibility, one that falsely unifying or reductive conceptions of reality miss. Both thinkers attack brainspun theoretical constructs or systems that Bakhtin variously terms "theoretism" or "monologism." For Lawrence similarly the enemy is the "curse of monos." He looks to "living chaos" to save him "from the strain of the monos, from homogeneity and exaltation and forcedness and all-of-a-pieceness, which is the curse of the human consciousness" (P 261). Here he is praising Crosby's poetry for *failing* to be conventionally coherent. Lawrence likes its "chaos" because of the possibilities for surprisingness or genuine newness, however unrealized, that it contains.

The comprehensive insight for both Bakhtin and Lawrence is of a complex unity prior to and as the basis of duality or dualistic modes of thought. Systematic or dualistic thinking confuses the chaotic (unfinalizable) nature of reality by reversing the priority of phenomena

and epiphenomena. Dualism privileges its own distorting impositions of consciousness upon the prior turbulent or polyphonic "unity" called chaos.

In a sense, both thinkers are vitalists in the tradition of Blake, Wordsworth and other Romantic poets and theorists. They oppose Newton's mechanistic cosmos and Descartes' dualistic model of mind and attempt to replace them by a Heraclitean "tension of antinomies," or a vision of chaos as prolific potentiality. As vitalists they believe that Heraclitean strife affirms the reality of creativity: it "provides for growth and development." "The difference between the two cosmologies, mechanist and vitalist, is thus between a closed and an open universe" (*Supreme Fictions* 9). Lawrence and Bakhtin are proponents of a "messy" reality that has the potential to organize itself into singular—opposed and related—unities, coherent consciousnesses that cluster and uncluster, "surging with full life" (EP 64).

Put another way, both men are deeply "prosaic" thinkers: "If one thinks prosaically, one doubts that any aspect of culture from the self to a language, from daily life to all of history, could be organized tightly enough to exhibit an all-encompassing pattern" (MB 28). For them, the solution to the distortions of systematic (mechanistic or dualistic) thinking lies in prosaicism: "The promised land . . . lies away beneath our feet," claims Lawrence (*Fantasia* 19). His most energetic thinking is never utopian.<sup>10</sup> He almost always fails to finish the utopian fantasies he begins, such as "Autobiographical Fragment" (P 817). Indeed, affirmation of the supreme value of the terrestrial and the quotidian led Aldous Huxley to term Lawrence a "mystical materialist" (Letters xx). For his part, Bakhtin champions the virtues of prose to the extent that for some critics it becomes his most distinguishing feature.<sup>11</sup>

Clearly, for both thinkers the first step in the rebuttal of "monologism" or "closed" systems of thought lies in an admission of the priority of chaos as unfinalizability. For the prosaic believer, the ordinary and the everyday is grounded in an infinite abundance of potential meaning and value. The truest relation of an individual to such a reality is an acknowledgement of personal limitation of perspective, and of essential ignorance: "The first business of every faith is to declare its ignorance" (*Fantasia* 20). Declared "ignorance" opens consciousness to the possibility of wonder and of growth in understanding. The first business of serious thought engaged in a dynamic of doubt, in other words, is attention to its own unexamined

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<sup>10</sup> Certainly *Lady Chatterley's Lover* has elements of utopianism; it also has elements of authorial exhaustion.

<sup>11</sup> *Creation of a Prosaics* is the subtitle of Morson's and Emerson's *Mikhail Bakhtin*.

certainities, particularly if those falsifying "certainties" refer to the "totality of things" as if they were a "seamless whole," and presume to speak with the single voice of irrefutable authority (MB 28).

Freud is just such an "authority," according to Lawrence and Bakhtin. He is the exemplar, particularly in his conception of the "unconscious," of "all-of-a-piece" or systematic thought, and for this reason Freud becomes the object of their sustained criticism.

### A. Freud and "the Scientists"

For both Bakhtin and Lawrence Freudianism is a prime example of monologic thinking. They believe that Freud denies the possibility of the "accidental, meaningless, or unrelated" in mental reality (MB 28). Basically, Freud's monologism denies Lawrencian immanency of creative chaos. Freudianism denies existence of an innate, unifying "soul" as a universal active principle. In the Freudian unconscious there is no conception of a "soulful" or spontaneous connection to the "deep source" as a potentially unifying dynamic. There is no connection to a messy (chaotic *and* creative) God. Nor could the Freudian unconscious ever be mistaken for a "fountain" of unique creativity, or the source of the primal positivity of Lawrencian "identity" (P 533).

Freud's monologism is such that he could not believe in the reality of "internal (psychical) accidental events."<sup>12</sup> Mental activity is presumed to be a "seamless whole"; all things—conscious or "unconscious"—are explicable, if one has the code. Clearly from this perspective, Freud's way of thinking is a "semiotic totalitarianism," in which even errors (so-called "Freudian slips") are necessarily purposeful. Even forgetting, for Freud, "results from 'an intention to forget'" (MB 28).

There is a presumption of certainty about the nature of reality in such monologism; there is arrogance, as Lawrence and Bakhtin see it, in the Freudian presumption of the existence of a single fixed explanatory key to human behavior. Lawrence naturally (given his reputation) was most incensed by Freudianism when the explanatory "key" to behavior was said to be sex, or the "incest-taboo." Lawrence believes in no one explanatory key to behavior, least of all in "sex": "All is *not* sex. And a sexual motive is *not* to be attributed to all human activities" (Fantasia 17).

Given that Lawrence attempts to rebut Freud at book-length (*Fantasia of the Unconscious* and *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*), as does

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<sup>12</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, trans. Alan Tyson, ed. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1965) 257. See too MB 28.

Bakhtin's collaborator Voloshinov (*Freudianism: A Critical Sketch*), it would be vain to aim at exhaustive review here. Fundamentally, both Lawrence and Bakhtin reject Freudianism's unconscious as an "impoverished" notion (MB 175), in that it is seemingly unconnected to positive creativity as unfinalizable potentiality. For Lawrence, the unconscious simply is "soul"—and soul is "the creative element" (Psychoanalysis 215).

Indeed, Lawrence challenges whether Freud's "unconscious" is categorically distinct from consciousness at all. For him, the Freudian "unconscious" seems rather an inverted shadow-consciousness, and he affirmatively adduces Trigan Burrow when he claims that "Freud's *unconscious* does but represent our conception of conscious sexual life as this latter exists in a state of repression" (Psychoanalysis 206). Lawrence takes it that by the "unconscious" Freud does not wish to imply "nascent consciousness," but rather "that which recoils from consciousness, that which reacts in the psyche away from mental consciousness":

[Freud's] unconscious is, we take it, that part of the human consciousness which, though mental, ideal in its nature, yet is unwilling to expose itself to full recognition, and so recoils back into the affective regions and acts there as a secret agent, unconfessed, unadmitted, potent, and usually destructive. The whole body of our repressions makes up our unconscious. (Psychoanalysis 209)

It is a significant aspect of Lawrence's purposeful playfulness that he has fun with Freud, or with *his* Freud. (This study of course is interested in Lawrence's Freud as revelatory of Lawrence's and Bakhtin's thinking, even if their Freud may be a straw man, and not necessarily or ever Freud at his most persuasive.) Lawrence remarks on the excitement Freud caused his contemporaries, seeming as he did to step suddenly "out of the conscious into the unconscious . . . like some supreme explorer" (Psychoanalysis 203). Freud, in other words, trespasses upon Lawrence's favorite activity as a crosser of boundaries, an explorer of betweennesses. Freud "walks straight through the wall of sleep, and we hear him rumbling in the cavern of dreams." Lawrence then asks what this "supreme explorer" has brought back from the nether regions of the dreaming unconscious:

What dreams, dear heart! What was there in the cave? Alas that we ever looked! Nothing but a huge slimy serpent of sex, and heaps of excrement, and a myriad repulsive little horrors spawned between sex and excrement. (Psychoanalysis 203)

Obviously Lawrence is having mocking fun, but what is at stake for him is supremely serious. He feels he must rescue from Freudianism his most cherished and essentially dialogic beliefs in the "pristine unconscious," and in the nexus of values it shelters: individuality, spontaneity as primal positivity of being, and the "liberty of newness" by means of which the individual engages in the work or project of shaping self from active chaos ("Whistling of Birds," SE 112). The Freudian unconscious for Lawrence is a sewer or a "cellar" "in which the mind keeps its own bastard spawn," whereas "the true unconscious" is a limpid "well-head" and "fountain of real motivity" (Psychoanalysis 207).

The Freudian conception of dreams, in which not even the thinnest wisp of a dream can be said to be insignificant, accidental, or unattached to the "seamless whole" of meaning, becomes one of Lawrence's main areas of concern. In the unfolding arguments of *Fantasia* and *Psychoanalysis* it is clear that Lawrence is not just locally concerned with the psychology of dreams; rather, he is defending an entire philosophy of potentiality against a monological view of humanity.

He does so first by allowing that there are significant dreams, but contends that most dreams are simply excreta of daily consciousness, and utterly insignificant: "We should not think of taking all these [dreams], piecing them together, and making a marvellous book of them, prophetic of the future and pregnant with the past. . . . [Their] significance is so small that we relegate it into the limbo of the accidental and meaningless." "Most dreams are purely insignificant":

They are the heterogeneous odds and ends of images swept together accidentally . . . and it is beneath our dignity to attach any real importance to them. It is always beneath our dignity to go degrading the integrity of the individual soul by cringing and scraping among the rag-tag of accident and of the inferior, mechanic coincidence and automatic event. Only those events are significant which derive from or apply to the soul in its full integrity. (*Fantasia* 164)

The challenge represented by Freudianism is to dialogic belief in "the soul in its full integrity," or in its inter-animating wholeness of being. For Lawrence Freudianism is very clearly an "idealism," a monologism. It is deterministic and totalitarian. In its unconscious there is no "surplus," no unfinalizability, no positive or rich sense of spontaneity and individual freedom of response: "The scientist wants to discover a cause for everything. And there is no cause for the religious impulse. Freud is with the scientists" (*Fantasia* 19). Bakhtin too, like Lawrence, is not "with the scientists," but with the faithful, where what this means is "[n]ot faith (in

the sense of a specific faith in orthodoxy, in progress, in man, in revolution, etc.), but a *sense of faith*, that is, an integral attitude (by means of the whole person) toward a higher and ultimate value" (TRDB 294).

For Lawrence and Bakhtin the emphasis is all on "higher" values of indeterminacy (surprisingness, originality, surplus) and freedom: "a rich understanding of selves must begin with a sense of people as free and morally responsible agents who are truly unfinalizable" (MB 175). Bakhtin and Lawrence would concur that "in the self, in culture, and in language, it is not (as Freud would have us believe) disorder or fragmentation that requires explanation: it is integrity" (MB 31). Hence, Bakhtin's and Lawrence's life-long dedication (each in his own way, of course) to the novel as the genre of emergence. Every individual in Lawrence's or Bakhtin's moral universe has a supreme responsibility to the "project of selfhood." As Bakhtin puts this, "There is no alibi for being" (KFP 112, 119; MB 31).

Freudianism has vast cultural-historical implications for both thinkers. As an implicitly deterministic "scientist," Freud is the "prophet" of a "new doctrine." Lawrence warns that "Freud is on the brink of a *Weltanschauung*—or at least a *Menschanschauung*, which is a much more risky affair." Like Bakhtin and his colleagues, Lawrence sees the issue of Freudianism unequivocally: "The issue first and foremost is a moral issue. It is not here a matter of reform, new moral values. It is the life or death of all morality" (Psychoanalysis 201-2).

In a sense, Lawrence's deepest objection to psychoanalysis, like Bakhtin's, is not psychological but philosophical. Lawrence accuses the "scientists," or monologic determinists, of having things both ways. While psychoanalysis as a semiotic totalitarianism denies the accidental or the unforeseen, or, that is, denies the sphere of freedom, originality, and ultimate responsibility to the individual, at the same time it arrogates total or "*ideal* liberty" to itself:

Hence psychoanalysis as the advance-guard of science, the evangel of the last *ideal* liberty. For of course there is a great fascination in a completely effected idealism. Man is then undisputed master of his own fate, the captain of his own soul. But better say engine-driver, for in truth he is no more than the little god in the machine, this master of fate. He has invented his own automatic principles, and he works himself according to them, like any little mechanic inside the works. (Psychoanalysis 211)

Psychoanalysis as a deterministic science appropriates for itself the "key" to its own world of ideally pure and perfect comprehensibility. By so doing, according to Lawrence's dialogic belief, psychoanalysis severs

itself from the dimension of creative chaos (unfinalizability, potentiality, freedom), where individuals are "noncoincident" with themselves because they are connected to living othernesses in the collaborative work of making meaning, organizing potential chaos into coherencies or unities large and small: "We are only the actors, we are never wholly the authors of our deeds and works," as Lawrence states (SCAL 26). Or as Bakhtin remarks, "The word in language is half someone else's" (DiN 293). What is lost to psychoanalysis is the conception of unique individuality or "soul," where "soul" is vital, intersubjective otherness as "noncoincidence" of self with self, and where individuality consequently is always more than isolated ego. What is lost to psychoanalysis is what Lawrence refers to as the "religious" dimension of reality.

For Bakhtin, too, psychoanalysis is responsible for an "impoverished" monologic view of the unconscious and of human nature itself. He resists the notion of "a separate and inaccessible structure out of which our impulses, fears, and surprises come, and argues instead for a richer, more varied, and more diverse picture of *consciousness*" (MB 175). Bakhtin criticizes theories of:

. . . forces that lie outside consciousness, externally (mechanically) defining it: from environment and violence to miracle, mystery, and authority. Consciousness under the influence of these forces loses its authentic freedom, and personality is destroyed. There, among these forces, one must also consign the unconscious (the 'id'). (TRDB 297)

Like Lawrence, Bakhtin is intent on blurring specious distinctions between the conscious and the unconscious. He works instead to describe the "numerous, diverse, socially heteroglot voices present in inner speech" (MB 175). That is, he works to develop an understanding of conscious dialogue as negotiation between living othernesses in the unfinalizable or soulful dimension of individuality—individuality in its full "depths and heights" as "creativity, activity, rebellion, freedom," in the "conscious sphere" (MB 198).

It is in this context that the importance of spontaneity in Lawrence's thinking becomes evident. His dialogism opposes systems of thought that see only necessity or chance in natural processes. He affirms a "fundamental reality which, on the one hand, is not absolutely necessitated and, on the other, is not chance; and which, again, is not a mixture or a blending of necessity and chance." This reality for Lawrence, as Vivante explains, "is called spontaneity, or originality, or grace (using this word in its deeper meaning)" (PhilPot 79).



Lawrence's spontaneity, in other words, is a "betweenness": it exists between necessity and chance as an emanation of the "deep source," or of what Vivante terms the "active principle" (PhilPot 95). By invoking spontaneity, Lawrence signals his opposition to any sort of monologic thinking that would render behavior automatic, mechanical, encodable, or explicable in a conclusive, certain, or finalizing way:

'Standard—no. I hate standards. . . . It's the hardest thing in the world to act spontaneously on one's impulses—and it's the only really gentlemanly thing to do—provided you're fit to do it.' (WL 32)

So Birkin lectures Gerald. Birkin is uncertain of Gerald's spontaneity or gentlemanliness, but not yet despairing of it. Gerald responds with outraged disbelief: "'And I . . . shouldn't like to be in a world of people who acted individually and spontaneously, as you call it.—We should have everybody cutting everybody else's throat in five minutes'" (WL 33). Gerald is a "denier." He lacks Birkin's "primal positivity." Gerald's thinking is deterministic and monologic in that for him all natures are one nature—the beast's.

Gerald's sense of "order" as the norm involves a totalitarian vision of authority necessarily imposing itself upon behavior. For him disorder has none of the "grace" of dialogic chaos (fecund, immanently purposeful, potentially unifying). For him, rather, disorder is—as it is for psychoanalysis—pathology. When, by contrast, spontaneity is the conduit of Lawrencian chaos, it has the values of "unity," "simplicity," freedom, creativity, vital potentiality and substantiality (see PhilPot 79ff). Spontaneity is essential to the project of selfhood, and thus the "only really gentlemanly thing to do."

## **B. Beauty, Mess**

Just as order and disorder are blurred distinctions in Lawrence and Bakhtin, so too are beauty and mess. In opposition to monologism, dialogism presents a "prosaic" view in which "order needs justification, disorder does not. The natural state of things is *mess*" (MB 30). Bakhtin envisions turbulent cultural and creative forces, incessantly at work in a push-pull of centripetal and centrifugal oppositions. Even the centrifugal forces tugging at the falsely unifying centripetal ones are not organized—there is no one organized opposition to unity of self or of culture in the prosaic-dialogic imagination (MB 30). Beauty, or the natural order of things, is "mess." Thus Bakhtin's close examination of the "grotesque" in *Rabelais and His World* is not peripheral to his fundamental worldview.

Nor is the emphasis on "mess" in Lawrence's "Red Geranium and Godly Mignonette":

But imagine, among the mud and the mastodons  
 God sighing and yearning with tremendous creative yearning, in that dark  
 green mess  
 oh, for some other beauty, some other beauty  
 that blossomed at last, red geranium, and mignonette.  
 (CP 691)

"That dark green mess" is itself "beauty." God yearns for "some *other* beauty" in addition to it (my italics). Mess is abundantly, "beautifully" immanent in creative reality. Mess is unfinalizable vitality itself, a surplus of potential creativity. Mess or the beauty of mess for Lawrence, if not explicitly for Bakhtin, is inherently purposive, and ultimately unknowable or, in Lawrence's terms, "mysterious." The messy mystery of beauty is particularly hateful to "science," according to him, "because it doesn't fit in the cause-and-effect chain" (SE 14).

Living or messy beauty is, for Lawrence, "primary, not instrumental. It is an original motive-value. It is not an extrinsic end, not an object" (PhilPot 82). Lawrence's recurrent interest in sex in his fiction and philosophy is an interest due in part to what he considers to be monologic science's inability to come to terms with the reality of chaotic "beauty." In this regard Lawrence and Bakhtin anticipate interests and directions taken by contemporary theoreticians of chaos. Lawrence's point of attack is the monologic basis of the "science" he knew:

How delightful, how naïve theories are! But there is a hidden will behind them all. There is a hidden will behind all theories of sex, implacable. And that is the will to deny, to wipe out the mystery of beauty.

Because beauty is a mystery. You can neither eat it nor make flannel out of it. Well, then, says science, it is just a trick to catch the female and induce her to propagate. How naïve! As if the female needed inducing. She will propagate in the dark, even—so where, then, is the beauty trick? (SE 14)

In reference to the above passage, Vivante notes that "it is indeed a curious problem, why many a scientist admits the preservation of the species as an end in itself, not needing explanation, and refuses the intrinsic purposiveness of form" (PhilPot 82). An appreciation of the "beauty" of mess (or of its "intrinsic purposiveness"), particularly when such appreciation is in opposition to a monologic, single cause-and-effect view of "science," is an essential condition for seeing prosaically, or for

seeing as Lawrence and Bakhtin do. While it may be excessive or misleading of Bakhtin's essentially non-teleological inclinations to claim that he sees purpose in all things and at all times, it is nevertheless the case that affirmation of carnival in him, as in Lawrence, is affirmation of "mess" as abundance, as a plenitude of purposive meaning and being; it is affirmation of the goodness and essential "gaiety" immanent in the prosaic moment or in everyday life.

Bakhtin studies carnival positivity in *Rabelais*, whereas Lawrence's fundamentally "angelic laughter" is ubiquitous. Commenting on the Etruscan worldview, for example, he notes admiringly that their tomb-paintings are "surging with full life": "life on earth was so good"; there is profound "belief in life, acceptance of life" and "gaiety" (EP 64). In other paintings, "the stream of dancers leaps wildly, playing music, carrying garlands or wine-jugs, lifting their arms like revellers, lifting their live knees, and signalling with their long hands" (EP 80). The vision in Lawrence is—as it nearly always is (in whatever local form his expression happens to take, including of course that of "demonic" laughter or carnival "decrowning")—of the messy vitality of the carnival celebration of life.

Those critics like Gordon who sense a certain nostalgia or emotional distance between Lawrence and his carnival vision are not entirely wrong. In this instance, for example, he regrets having been shut out of the Etruscan party, and he laments the moroseness of his own time and place. But he is always and only sure, as a matter of personal experience, of a primarily positive "creative nucleus" immanent in all life, at all times. Personal exclusion from the Etruscan party, or one like it, is for Lawrence merely accidental and insignificant. Exclusion is a fact of mortality, as he well knew. Part of the "nostalgia" that some critics sense is simply the intimation, in his later work, of his own mortality. However, his is not a nostalgia that contradicts his fundamental ontological valuations or his essentially celebratory outlook. As Lawrence writes to Lady Cynthia Asquith, "It is a great thing to realize that the original world is still there—perfectly clean and pure, many white advancing foams . . ." (CL 2, 375).

His diction in expressing the world's "original," integral and still operative purity is revealing in its omnipresent dialogicality: "many white advancing foams" suggests the values of a varied and momentaneous unity ("many"), a strong future-oriented arrow of time ("advancing"), and potentiality as incessant, immanent becoming. His "original world" that is "still there" is ontologically akin to Bakhtin's dialogic word itself. There is no debilitating nostalgia or incipient despair in either Lawrence or Bakhtin. Both are quintessential philosophers of potentiality.

(3) *That language, particularly in its prosaic or multi-voiced evocations, is the truest means of dialogic understanding.* With its prosaic emphasis on disorder or beautiful mess as the norm and on order as always suspect (as imposition of authority, monologism), it is understandable that dialogism would privilege prose, specifically the novel, as, in Lawrence's well-known words, the "one bright book of life" (P 535). The novel is especially "moral" because it has the dialogic virtue of "relatedness." Lawrence puts it in a manner worth repeating and exploring in greater detail:

The novel is the highest example of subtle inter-relatedness that man has discovered. Everything is true in its own time, place, circumstance, and untrue outside of its own place, time, circumstance. If you try to nail anything down, in the novel, either it kills the novel, or the novel gets up and walks away with the nail. (P 528)

A more Bakhtinian or prosaic sense of the novel is unimaginable. The novel's inherent prosaics oppose monologism, as Lawrence vigorously emphasizes:

Now here we see the great beauty and value of the novel. Philosophy, religion, science, they are all of them busy nailing things down, to get a stable equilibrium. Religion, with its nailed down One God, who says *Thou shalt, Thou shan't*, and hammers home every time; philosophy, with its fixed ideas; science with its 'laws': they, all of them, all the time, want to nail us on to some tree or other.

But the novel, no. (P 528)

The novel's greatest prosaic value is that it is incapable of the "absolute" or monologic imposition of authorial totalitarianism (P 536). Dialogic prose involves the rough and tumble engagement of the "primary author" and his work. The *"fully realized and thoroughly consistent dialogic position"* is one that "affirms the independence, internal freedom, unfinalizability, and indeterminacy of the hero":

For the author the hero is not 'he' and not 'I' but a fully valid 'thou', that is, another and other autonomous 'I' ('thou art'). (PDP 63)

Prose is inherently messy, or vital. It has no monologic uniformity; it admits sometimes obstreperous othernesses within itself, or what Lawrence terms the *"resistance of life"* (CL 2, 638; italics his).

Bakhtin has a similar sense of the novel's resistant liveliness: "Intensely dialogic discourse," he observes, includes a sense of active

rejoinder or resistance. It has a "hidden polemic" in which "every word [is] reacting intensely to someone else's word, answering it and anticipating it" (PDP 197). Dialogic prose proceeds strenuously, inviting resistances and rejoinders within itself; it does not seek facile resolutions. In a word, it thinks messily, which does not mean, of course, that it does not think "beautifully" or precisely in its own way. Bakhtin and Lawrence do not simply or perversely praise the novel, in opposition to Jamesian standards, as a "loose and baggy monster." Rather, the novel is a "supreme" form of expression because of the precision and vividness with which it can embrace the quiddities of prosaic "laughing" reality.<sup>13</sup> Both Bakhtin and Lawrence locate intimately cherished values of their dialogic-vitalistic worldview in the novel and in laughter. "The principle of laughter," declares Bakhtin, "destroys all pretense of an extratemporal meaning and unconditional value of necessity. It frees human consciousness, thought, and imagination for new potentialities" (RAHW 49).

It is revealing of their essential agreement about the nature of the novel that both writers independently trace the origins of the kind of novel they care most about to the Socratic dialogues. The novel's "spirit" is of "process and inconclusiveness," as is the daimonic spirit of Socratic dialogue (EaN 7). The novel is the "language of the marketplace" (RAHW, Chapter 2).

For Lawrence "Plato's Dialogues are queer little novels" (P 520). Correspondingly, Bakhtin traces the origins of the prosaic imagination to "elemental popular laughter" or folklore that "gave rise to a field of literature labeled *"spoudogeloion,"* or the "serio-comic," in which the Socratic dialogues are included (EaN 21). Serio-comic genres such as the Socratic dialogues are precursors of "the novel as the genre of becoming" in that laughter "demolishes" distance and hierarchy. As Lawrence says of the novel: "Art-speech is the only truth. An artist is usually a damned liar, but his art, if it be art, will tell you the truth of his day. And that is all that matters. Away with eternal truth. Truth lives from day to day . . ." (SCAL 8). Not only is the artist in Lawrence's conception "decrowned," or divested of his dictatorial or monologic authority over his own creation—indeed, the artist in his view cannot even prevent his own tale from ratting on him—but the novel is also crowned supreme in a momentaneous *and* eternal realm: the realm of "truth," the perfectly prosaic realm of the "day to day."

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<sup>13</sup> Lawrence in *Etruscan Places* implicitly makes similar claims about laughter and the highest human reality.

Of the novel's special immediacy of perspective Bakhtin notes: "Even where the past or myth serves as the subject of representation in these genres there is no epic distance, and contemporary reality provides the point of view" (EaN 23). The novel's "spontaneity" is its contact with the "inconclusive present; this is what keeps the genre from congealing" (EaN 27). Its fundamental "laughter" or prosaicism is a matter of being in touch with the rough and tumble, here and now:

It is precisely laughter that destroys the epic, and in general destroys any hierarchical (distancing and valorized) distance. As a distanced image a subject cannot be comical; to be made comical, it must be brought close. Everything that makes us laugh is close at hand. . . . Laughter [draws an object] into a zone of crude contact where one can finger it familiarly on all sides, turn it upside down, inside out, peer at it from above and below, break open its external shell, look into its center, doubt it, take it apart, dismember it, lay it bare and expose it, examine it freely and experiment with it. Laughter demolishes fear and piety before an object, before a world, making of it an object of familiar contact and thus clearing the ground for an absolutely free investigation of it. . . . [Laughter] delivers the object into the fearless hands of investigative experiment—both scientific and artistic. . . . Familiarization of the world through laughter and popular speech is an extremely important and indispensable step in making possible free, scientifically knowable and artistically realistic creativity in European civilization. (EaN 23)

Lawrence manifests a similar awareness of the nature of novelistic thought as investigative laughter when he notes not only that Plato's dialogues are "queer little novels," but also that philosophy and fiction "used to be one": "it was the greatest pity in the world, when philosophy and fiction got split" (P 520). His dialogic novels, of which *Women in Love* is the epitome, are in a sense experiments in reconciling philosophy and fiction, a reconciliation made in the spirit of laughter (when laughter is considered in its full Bakhtinian import). *Women in Love* in particular, like Bakhtin's literary critical analysis itself, attempts with investigative laughter to reunify philosophy and fiction.

Clearly for dialogism, vitality as potentiality is a boundary phenomenon. It resides in the space between individuals, in "living" language, particularly in its prosaic evocations. Language is the best conduit of "life" so conceived. Conversation (including that which is between author and reader), when it is "serious and sincere," a "moral encounter of people,"