

Spring 5-2011

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Recommended Citation

Robinson, Alyssa, "Dialogical Narrative and the Struggle for Vehicle Consciousness in D.H Lawrence's *Women in Love*" (2011).
Theses. 6.
<http://scholarship.shu.edu/theses/6>

Dialogical Narrative and the Struggle for Verbal Consciousness in D. H. Lawrence's *Women in*

Love

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in the

Department of English

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May 8, 2011

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In his foreword to *Women in Love*, D. H. Lawrence writes, “Any man of real individuality tries to know and to understand what is happening, even in himself, as he goes along. This struggle for verbal consciousness should not be left out in art. It is a very great part of life” (486). Lawrence portrays this struggle in the novel through the characters of Ursula and Birkin as they strive to articulate the “new” conditions in which their love can exist. The renunciation of their “old” ways of being is a recurring topic of conversation between the two, but their spoken words do little to resolve, for the reader, what exactly this figurative “excuse” entails. In *Women in Love*, Lawrence’s narrator voices the characters’ unspoken ruminations on love, its communication, and their desire to create a new life together. This voice, beyond the characters’ words, turns the reader’s attention to the difficulty of expression itself. In “Mooney,” Birkin painstakingly attempts to profess his love for Ursula, only to give up “angrily,” wishing “her to be with him there, in this world of proud indifference” (250). Lawrence writes, “But what was the good of telling her he wanted this company in proud indifference? What was the good of talking, any way? It must happen beyond the sound of words” (250). The narrator’s influence in the scene, among many others in the novel, defines the immediate struggle as one of articulation, much like Lawrence’s own premise set forth in his foreword. Birkin’s anger derives not only from Ursula’s lack of understanding but also from his own inability to express what exactly he wants for himself and from her—here, what the narrator names a union in “this world of proud indifference” (250). While ambiguous, the phrase emphasizes the narrator’s role as interpreter of Birkin’s conscious thoughts. Lawrence acknowledges Birkin’s awareness of his failure to communicate as well as to provide an explanation for his frustration, beyond Ursula’s apparent obstinacy. It appears that the “new” way of being, for Ursula and Birkin, requires the

inauguration of a new language, if not a new form of language that can effectively capture their groping for verbal consciousness. Lawrence's narrative voice acts as mediator as it communicates the characters' inner struggles to the reader, but at the same time it reflects upon itself as interpreter, commenting on the impossibility of narrating those experiences that are seemingly unnarratable.

It is difficult to gauge the importance of the narrator in *Women in Love*, especially in light of recent critics' emphasis on the multiple and diverse character voices that contribute to Lawrence's "dialogic" style. Bethan Jones asserts that in the novel "the act of perception is filtered through the consciousness of each particular character without the intervention of a presiding authoritative narrator" (207). The narrator's third-person reference to the characters' thoughts and actions establishes authorial presence, yet the voice is hardly intrusive. Critics often attribute shifts in the tone of the narrative voice to Lawrence's fluid treatment of point-of-view in the novel; direct speech dominates, and as the narrator indicates who is speaking, he also gives voice to the characters' unspoken thoughts in speech that closely resembles their already established style of communication. David Lodge adds that there is little to no "finalizing judgemental word" (99) on the part of the narrator as he plays the role of what Gerald Doherty calls "the astonished witness," a mere spectator of "the quantum leaps he records but for which he possesses no adequate explanation" (148). While this model seems an overall accurate description of Lawrence's narrative style, it does not explain what sets *Women in Love* apart as his most successful narrative experiment thus far.

As earlier critics grappled with this question, their descriptions of the novel consistently pointed toward a difference in Lawrence's narrative method in comparison to *The Rainbow* and

other previous works. Stephen J. Miko says that in *Women in Love* “there is a shift in both method and purpose...More than any of Lawrence’s books, *Women in Love* is a struggle for consciousness, a search for definition. The struggle, it should be noted at the outset, is in aesthetic and even intellectual terms a success” (216). For Miko, Lawrence’s emphasis on the struggle for articulation accounts for the coherence of the novel, providing an “inclusive pattern” (216) that allows him to tie up loose ends from his previous book. The “loose ends” to which Miko refers have less to do with the characters’ experiences than they do with the way those experiences are expressed. Linguistically, *Women in Love* “addresses itself to a greater range of problems and puts those problems in clearer perspective than any of his other novels” (216). The critic contends that Lawrence’s struggle for verbal consciousness, as an author, can be traced in his use of “novelistic devices of significant detail” (219). The narrator is not a mere witness to the characters’ journeys, but is the important voice that relates these details and, as I will later explore, he best demonstrates the significant shifts in tone in *Women in Love* that echo the characters’ unspoken, conscious and unconscious experiences. A part of the dialogic novel, the narrative voice may “exist on the same plane” (Vice 112) as the characters, but his influence is most crucial to the reader’s impression of Lawrence’s commentary on communication itself. Just as “Ursula and Birkin are keenly aware of the limits of language” (Stewart 96), the narrator vigorously reinforces the futility of words, repeatedly reflecting upon the process of the text’s creation and at times exposing its inability to convey.

Miko alludes to Lawrence’s metafictional agenda in the novel, yet his study does not overtly discuss the author’s experimentation with narrative as a means of expressing it. Other critics find that Bakhtin’s theories offer a fitting vocabulary to describe the dynamic that arises

among competing voices in *Women in Love*. Avrom Fleishman says that Lawrence's manipulation of narrative voice deems him a "grand master of the oral, dialectical, parodic, and polyglot manner" (169), and assures that "it is not necessary to follow up [Bakhtin's] copious examples in Dostoyevsky to call them to mind: a close study of Lawrence will reveal that *all* of these double-voiced, dialogical situations are in play in his later prose" (169). Indeed, recent critics also acknowledge that passages in *Women in Love* easily substantiate many of the theorist's major concepts, even going as far as to claim that Lawrence anticipates Bakhtin's theories in his own literary criticism. Elizabeth Sargent and Garry Watson write, "Lawrence's theory of the novel is in many ways uncannily close to Bakhtin's" (410). Perhaps the only obstacle facing his "being taken seriously as an original thinker" is that Lawrence "is thought of primarily as a novelist" (410). In "Morality and the Novel," Lawrence evokes Bakhtin's notion of dialogism, characterizing morality in the novel as "the trembling instability of the balance. When the novelist puts his thumb in the scale, to pull down the balance to his own predilection, that is immorality" (172). In *Women in Love*, the author observes his own rule, if not Bakhtin's, as he gives precedence to his characters' words, distancing his personal intentions through his organization of heteroglossia. Bakhtin writes, "Authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters are merely those fundamental compositional unities with whose help heteroglossia can enter the novel" (263). The interaction between these distinct character voices more or less dialogizes many of the central themes of the novel, but a major presence that adds to their multivocality belongs to Lawrence's narrator, who, in his own dialogic voice, constructs another level of heteroglossia at work within the narrative.

Doherty notes the "sudden, unaccounted for ruptures" in character representation in

Women in Love, “the dramatic switches in narratorial posture and poise from a harshly judgmental to a deeply emphatic narrator,” and lists just a few of the many genres of speech that he takes on, including “A language of biblical witness (‘And now behold’)” and “a lexicon of the occult” (148). The narrator’s heteroglossic exhibition underscores his own struggle to describe the events before him, but rather than endeavor to investigate the influence of all of these distinct voices, this study will concern the narrator as critic of language, the style of speech that he employs in his descriptions of Ursula’s and Birkin’s struggles for articulation. Bakhtin writes, “We acutely sense two levels at each moment in the story; one, the level of the narrator, a belief system filled with his objects, meanings and emotional expressions, and the other, the level of the author, who speaks (albeit in a refracted way) by means of this story and through this story” (314). As the narrative voice enacts the same struggle for verbal consciousness as the characters, he also demonstrates that he is keenly aware of this effort, taking time to digress upon the problem of language that Lawrence himself takes up in his foreword. For Ursula and Birkin, their inability to articulate hinders their entry into the “new” life that they desire, but for the narrator, it is a struggle closest to Lawrence’s—one of the artist who must strive to convey “the new passion, the new idea,” without “the superimposition of a theory” (486). As the narrator’s, Ursula’s, and Birkin’s speeches converge both stylistically and thematically, Lawrence dialogizes this concern, allowing the reader to hear all of their voices in any one speech, all of their words reading as a “‘micro’ version of the dialogue of the novel as a whole” (Vice 58). Once he establishes the problem of language, Lawrence, in later scenes of sexual consummation, also evokes a bodily semiotic, indicating that the characters’ struggles account for both verbal and physical forms of communication. Analysis of such passages, marked by the narrator’s use of

mystical language, shows the way in which the author refracts his belief that, in his historical moment, “the sensual passions and mysteries are equally sacred with the spiritual mysteries and passions. Who would deny it any more?” (485).

Lawrence’s narrative pattern enables a focus that transcends the immediate subject matter of *Women in Love* and that concerns the act of writing itself. As he foregrounds the characters’ struggles for verbal consciousness, particularly in the more momentous, emotionally and sexually charged scenes in the novel, he consistently draws attention to his own evolving method of articulation; however, readers have tended to criticize these moments in *Women in Love* precisely because of the vague, seemingly cryptic language that Lawrence employs. According to Avrom Fleishman, early studies of Lawrence’s narrational style target such passages as prime examples of the author’s “badnesses,” the “purple passages, the swatches of slack dialogue and careless narration, the lapses into self-indulgent vituperation” (162). Fleishman defends Lawrence from blunt attacks on the “occasional flaws in his masterpieces” and claims that he did in fact initiate “a number of exploratory directions” and breakthroughs in “narrative art” (162). Wayne Booth adds, “[He] was experimenting radically with what it means for a novelist to lose his own distinct voice in the voices of his characters...[it] is a mistake...to talk of Lawrence’s deliberately blurred handling of point of view as ‘simply’ a technical innovation: it is a powerful *ethical* invention” (540). Sargent and Watson also acknowledge that Lawrence’s novels are structured dialogically, that this has “established itself as a truism within Lawrence scholarship” (411), but Booth’s reference to the author’s “blurring” of character perspective suggests additional narrative strategies at work in the novel. Seymour Chatman’s work on fiction, specifically on point-of-view, further elucidates Lawrence’s deliberate manipulation of narration as a means of

expressing his characters' as well as his own process of development, especially in his use of the protagonists' minds as vehicles through which the events of the narrative are perceived.

Chatman's "slant," the "attitudinal function" (191) of a narrator as he conveys the character's thought-streams, as well as "interest-focus," which is "related to the character in whose interest the reader is invited to read the narrative" (Sasaki 126), prove useful narratological tools, in addition to Bakhtinian heteroglossia, for analyzing Lawrence's complex method.

The narrator greatly influences the reader's understanding of the protagonists' inner struggles for articulation, as well as of their moments of psychological breakthrough, beyond the immediate crises of their physical experiences. With his shifts of tone in climactic scenes of the novel's central plot, Lawrence trains his audience to not only recognize these important moments, but in fact to read *for* them. The ambiguity of the narrator's language reflects the unnarratability of Ursula and Birkin's experiences, and thus he proves an important voice that drives both the plot and the way in which the reader learns to read it. His voice accounts for the narrative's unnarratability as well as for the need to incorporate the struggle for articulation into art, the method Lawrence so vehemently promotes in his foreword. This metafictional dialogue would be much more pronounced in his later work, particularly in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. In his manipulation of narrative persona, Lawrence utilizes an innovative method with which he can both reinforce his novel's concerns and instruct readers in how to approach reading, writing, and the struggle for verbal consciousness. Like Ursula and Birkin's journey toward a "new" way of being, Lawrence's narrative method in *Women in Love* accounts for its process of becoming, for its own inadequacies, and perhaps this is what sets the novel apart from its predecessors.

At the onset of the novel, Lawrence establishes his vacillating narrative technique as

Ursula and Gudrun exchange their views on marriage and decide to attend a wedding—not as guests, but as furtive spectators. Their spoken and unspoken words throughout “Sisters” smoothly transition from one to the other as the women observe and reflect upon their future lovers, Birkin and Gerald, while the events of the day unfold. Lawrence’s narrator prefaces their opening conversation with an emphasis on their thoughts, rather than their speech, which is unexpected given that the scene is comprised predominantly of dialogue. This foregrounds the more important mental processes of the women, particularly of Ursula, that are filtered through the narrator and that dictate the reader’s judgment of the women. Lawrence writes, “They were mostly silent, talking as their thoughts strayed through their minds. ‘Ursula,’ said Gudrun, ‘don’t you *really* want to get married?’ ... ‘I don’t know,’ she replied. ‘It depends how you mean’” (7). Gudrun is “taken aback” (7) at her sister’s indefinite response, and thus the novel opens with an initial moment of confusion, prompted by the word “marriage,” that leads the reader to associate Ursula with words and the problem of their various connotations. Throughout “Sisters,” she questions the validity of socialized language and is described as “bitter” (9) when she ponders this prospect, even “afraid” and “intimidated” by her sister’s “sang froid and exclusive bareness of manner” (8). Gudrun is seen and judged through the eyes of Ursula, inviting the reader to view the latter as the novel’s “interest-focus,” not solely its protagonist, but the “filter” through which the events of the narrative are experienced.

The narrator centers his commentary upon Ursula’s building aggravation in order to highlight the character’s interiority. Rather than contribute to the sisters’ critique of marriage in the fashion of a standard, obtrusive narrative voice, he allows Ursula to project her own ideology, if not Lawrence’s. Critic Toru Sasaki finds Chatman’s theory most helpful in characterizing

Lawrence's manipulation of perspective, stressing that "filter," as opposed to the nondescript term "point-of-view," more explicitly infers "the mental activity experienced by characters in the story world" (126). Chatman writes:

The choice of one or another character for such a purpose entails obvious constraints on what can be presented by the discourse. The narrator cannot "have" the Focus of Narration, since he is not in the story. He is outside, in the discourse, and things have been so arranged in this kind of narrative that his report of what happened is screened or filtered through a single or a few characters' consciousnesses. (193)

The model aptly describes the narrator's use of Ursula's and Birkin's thought processes as a means of depicting both the plot of the novel and its major concerns. Chatman's consideration of the narrator's limitations in this narrative design suggests, somewhat in line with Bakhtin, that the privileging of characters' voices and languages allows the author to most accurately, or at least most convincingly refract his or her agendas. Bakhtin writes, "Such a refracting of authorial intentions takes place in all of these forms (the narrator's tale, the tale of a posited author or that of one of the characters)...the refraction may be at times greater, at times lesser, and in some aspects of language there may be a complete fusion of voices" (315). For Lawrence, the use of Ursula as a lens through which the narrative is seen and understood suits his casting of her as the novel's protagonist, its "interest-focus," as well as informs his ultimate commentary upon the limits of language itself. His narrator, as he strives to convey the events before him, resolves to voice Ursula's unspoken, conscious thoughts, thus enabling him to capture the real significance of the scene—not its specific dialogue, but its establishment of the women's interior dispositions. Combined with her direct speech that alludes to language and its tendency to corrupt what may

otherwise be real or true, the reader discerns the profundity of Ursula's plight, as well as aligns her with the struggle for verbal consciousness that Lawrence will later echo in Birkin.

When Gudrun states that marriage is the "inevitable next step," Ursula responds, "it seems like that when one thinks in the abstract" (9). Ursula's fixation upon language disrupts the flow of an otherwise simple conversation, suggesting that the social implications of the word itself mask the fact that marriage cannot cure their ennui. Time and again, the narrator's accounts of the women's unvoiced but conscious reflections reinforce their positions and prove more coherent than their actual words. Gudrun dominates and smiles mockingly as she abruptly ends their conversation more than once, leaving Ursula "still brooding" (10). She says, "What is it all but words!" (10), but, for Ursula, it appears that it is all about words. When asked her opinion on children, she pensively says, "Perhaps one doesn't really want them, in one's soul—only superficially" (9). Ursula's evasive language in the scene not only expresses her ambivalence toward domestic life but it also foretells the character's pending struggle for articulation that the narrator more eloquently conveys moments later. Lawrence writes, "She lived a good deal by herself...always thinking, trying to lay hold on life, to grasp it in her own understanding. Her active living was suspended, but underneath, in the darkness, something was coming to pass. If only she could break through the last integuments!" (9). The narrator gives voice to Ursula's "prescience," her mere inkling of "something yet to come" (9) which readers recognize she cannot conceivably articulate. Here, the narrative voice operates in at least two ways in regard to the reader's perception of Ursula's plight in the novel. From a narratological standpoint, Lawrence employs "slant," Chatman's term that describes a narrator's "attitudinal function" within a text as he or she uses a "character's consciousness as the screen or filter through which

the events of a story are perceived” (191). In the case of Ursula, Lawrence chooses to convey her thought-stream not in quoted dialogue, but in the words of a “covert narrator” (Chatman 195); as if it were overheard by the narratee, the passage reads much like free indirect thought with the exception of the narrator’s initial third-person reference. This depends upon the context of the passage within the scene, as the urgency of Ursula’s feeling—moments later—prompts her to jump from her chair “eagerly...as if to escape something” (11). The consistency of Ursula’s thought and action assures the reader that these *are* her thoughts, but the anomaly lies in the markedly articulate manner in which they are expressed. The narrator does not reveal any significant clues as to her future, yet he comes closest to communicating the sense of anticipation in the character’s mind, delaying her continuous thought-stream in order to call attention to the gravity of its importance. Lawrence’s use of free indirect speech allows the narrator to employ his slant, as his exclamatory rendering of Ursula’s thought captures its urgency as well as continues to establish her as the character whose perspective the narrative depends upon. This invites readers to empathize with Ursula and to await the eventual realization of what will “come to pass,” quite literally the events that will unfold that center not upon her “active” life, but upon her mental life and attitude.

The narrator’s slant in the scene, secondly, measures the significance of Ursula’s thoughts as opposed to Gudrun’s, as the latter is generally described only in terms of her appearance. Miko writes, “Gudrun is presented visually...Instead Ursula is presented to us in terms of feelings, her struggles, and her potential; in place of details of clothing we are given metaphors emphasizing expectancy and possibility: the essential flame, the infant in the womb” (218). The narrator does not entirely dismiss Gudrun, and hence his descriptions of her still evoke the greater thematic

thread that will follow in the course of her destructive relationship with Gerald, her face “expressionless,” “mask-like” (9), and “hardened” (8), her voice “strident” (8) and “cold” (11), and her looks “hostile” (9). Still, the narrator’s overt attention to Ursula’s interiority inclines the reader to judge Gudrun through her mind and eyes, in a sense authorizing the protagonist’s values as opposed to her sister’s. Beyond his attention to Ursula’s thoughts, the narrator also thematically associates the character with the struggle for articulation itself, a concern that will follow her for the duration of the novel. Just as Ursula’s speeches in “Sisters” are ambiguous, the narrator’s words, while undeniably eloquent, are still vague in terms of content. Nonetheless, his use of prophetic language, presumably foreign to Ursula’s everyday vocabulary, implores the reader to invest in the subplot of Ursula’s psychological maturity. Lawrence writes, “She seemed to try to put her hands out, like an infant in the womb, and she could not, not yet” (9). Ursula’s long journey toward verbal consciousness is only in its beginning stages, and the reader is encouraged to follow her development through the course of the novel’s main plot of action. The narrator’s unexpected shift in tone in the opening chapter echoes later scenes involving Birkin in which he continues the extended metaphor of creation and likens his own journey toward verbal consciousness to fetal development. The tone of Ursula’s, Birkin’s, and the narrator’s speeches almost always resonate with a sense of expectancy, recreating the same dialogue as their voices call out to each other, converge, interrupt, and essentially dialogize Lawrence’s greater concern with the struggle for articulation.

A similar pattern emerges in the author’s treatment of Birkin in “In the Train,” the first chapter that thoroughly explores the inner mind of the character. The scene initiates the ongoing homoerotic tension between him and Gerald that is exacerbated by their opposing dispositions—

Gerald, confident and consciously “older, more knowing” (59), and Birkin “insistent” (58) yet uncertain. Their conversation also sets up Gerald’s association with the colliery as Birkin criticizes the modern world, calling it a “game for self-important people” who “cover the earth with foulness... a blotch of labour” (55). Much of the chapter reads in direct speech with short intersperses of Miko’s “significant detail” on the part of the narrator, mostly physical descriptions of the men’s gestures and expressions. In this scene, rather than mediating through the narrator, Lawrence quotes Birkin’s inner ruminations directly. The effect familiarizes the reader with his convoluted, at times incomprehensible, thought processes that will define the character throughout the novel. In the following passage, Lawrence employs double-voiced discourse in his dialogization of the character’s critique of language. Birkin’s speech, without the outside slant of the narrator, directly recalls Ursula’s earlier thoughts:

Birkin looked at the land, at the evening, and was thinking: “Well, if mankind is destroyed...I am satisfied...After all, what is mankind but just one expression of the incomprehensible. And if mankind passes away, it will only mean that this particular expression is completed and done. That which is expressed, and that which is to be expressed, cannot be diminished...The creative utterances will not cease, they will only be there. Humanity doesn’t embody the utterance of the incomprehensible any more. Humanity is a dead letter. There will be a new embodiment, in a new way. Let humanity disappear as quick as possible.” (59)

Lawrence’s choice to depict Birkin’s thoughts in direct speech, rather than in a free indirect report from the narrator, underscores the character’s proclivity for theoretical thinking. Ursula has only a mere “prescience” of the new possibilities she anticipates, and thus the narrator must

verbalize it. Birkin, on the other hand, is utterly self-assured in his conviction and can speak for himself. Miko writes, “Lawrence’s hero...embodies that possibility in his role as an intellectual with unabashedly intellectual attitudes, pursuits, and even vocation (though this last does not satisfy him and is given up)...and Ursula’s job, or one of her jobs, is to set him straight” (226). As the reader recalls Ursula’s earlier fixation upon language in “Sisters,” Birkin’s speech seems to more appropriately call out to *her*, rather than to Gerald, who is physically present, but, “laughing at the words and the mocking humour of the other man” (56), remains facetious. By refracting his critique through their speeches, Lawrence not only links his protagonists to this mutual concern but also suggests that, more than an effort immediate to their story, the struggle for verbal consciousness is indeed a theory. Bakhtin writes, “Such speech...serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author” (324). Birkin, certainly characterized as the “unabashed intellectual” of the novel, effectively speaks for Lawrence, allowing the author to embed rather than impose his beliefs.

In the speech, Birkin conceives of mankind in terms of expression, the current grim fate of his generation only one of many phases—or perhaps “phrases”—that come and go. Rather than mourn the perceived “foulness” of humanity, Birkin, like Ursula, looks forward to a change, “a new embodiment, in a new way,” and his speeches constantly use the metaphor of language as he strives to impart his beliefs. He says to Gerald, “Can’t you see...‘that to help my neighbor to eat is no more than eating myself. ‘I eat, thou eatest, he eats, we eat, you eat, they eat’—and what then? Why should every man decline the whole verb. First person singular is enough for me” (55-56). Gerald gives himself time to “readjust after this tirade” (56), as does the reader as we are

thrown into the world of Birkin's unrelenting speeches. At this point in the novel, the reader comes to align Birkin with this lofty, theoretical language, his idealistic visions evocative of the commentary of a conventional, omniscient narrative voice. The reader's ambivalent response to Birkin's pretentious speech is expected, but, weighed against Lawrence's characterization of Gerald in the scene, the passion of his conviction deems him the victor. Jack Stewart writes, "even parodic stylization can have a prophetic resonance that works *ad hominem* against its detractor...here the initiated reader's response is coopted in defending Birkin's views" (108). As the stubborn, all-knowing Gerald abruptly interrupts him and indifferently asks where he is staying in London, the reader reconsiders Birkin's motives. Stewart references a similar situation in which the character's letter, with its lofty rhetoric, is read in the *Pompadour*. His supercilious words, when mocked by the previously ridiculed Halliday, create a "confrontation between Birkin's lived ideas and Halliday's sterile mimicry," calling the relative "life values" of the characters' into the equation (108). Stewart writes, "if Halliday, who is impotent and foolish, ridicules Birkin's ideas, then those ideas may have to be taken seriously" (108). Rather than insert his beliefs in the form of an authoritative narrator, Lawrence dialogically produces them through the novel's interacting voices, trusting that his readers will make the correct judgment. *Women in Love's* narrative framework constantly favors Ursula's and Birkin's voices, undermining any of their perceived pretenses by contextualizing their speeches around the words of characters whose values are inferior to their own. Furthermore, the narrator's slant contributes to the emerging hierarchy among Lawrence's character voices as he details their various interactions, giving preferentiality to the protagonists' thoughts in his commentary despite their sometimes long-winded speeches. Whether their speeches reduce them to ridicule or not,

Lawrence still reinforces “one of the central thematic concerns of his book” as “The value of talk is essentially the value of worrying things into consciousness” (Miko 243).

Birkin’s fixation on the efficacy of language is later echoed when the narrator characterizes the men’s intensifying relationship. For Gerald, “It was the rich play of words and quick interchange of feelings he enjoyed. The real content of the words he never really considered” (59). The narrator confirms that this is a significant thorn in their relationship, that “Birkin knew this...that Gerald wanted to be *fond* of him without taking him seriously” (59). The narrative voice subtly functions to echo Birkin’s discourse in the scene as he too takes up the metaphor of language and equates the general dynamic of their relationship with the imbalanced nature of exchange in their conversations. Gerald essentially ignores Birkin’s words, and the narrator’s point enriches Lawrence’s commentary on language itself and its potential to complicate the relationships among his characters. He writes, “As the train ran on, he sat looking at the land, and Gerald fell away, became nothing to him” (59). Birkin’s building frustration comes to a head despite his ongoing admiration of the man’s physical beauty, a conflict akin to Ursula’s veneration of Gudrun’s appearance alongside her growing agitation in “Sisters.” In the case of both characters, the narrative voice underlines their interior battles, regardless of their physical experiences, or even of the immediate plot of the novel itself. Furthermore, the more explicit metafictional commentary that emerges in “In the Train” evokes Ursula’s plight, although she is not present. After all, Ursula is the one who tolerates and challenges Birkin in his journey toward articulation, just as she, “like an infant in the womb,” is determined to reach “a new embodiment” through her union with him. Miko says that these characters, not the confident Gerald, “carry on the Lawrentian quest for selfhood” (224), and thus the narrator’s descriptions

of them are always analogous. As their relationship grows, Ursula's and Birkin's speeches more explicitly concern the futility of expression through words, an attitude Lawrence's narrator reaffirms in his own discourse.

Birkin's theories of love and humanity are revisited in "An Island" in which Ursula entertains and at times revels in the possibility of his apocalyptic visions. Throughout their excursion upon the lake, Ursula also develops wavering feelings toward Birkin in response to his voiced philosophy, feeling a "certain sharp contempt and hate of him" because she is aware that "in spite of himself, he would have to be trying to save the world...She wanted him to herself" (128). It is Birkin who creates "this duality in feeling" (129) in her as Ursula battles against her attraction to his "humanless" world, a "phantasy" at odds with her own certainty of humanity's "hideous actuality" (128). Lawrence's narrator adds, "Her subtle, feminine, demoniacal soul knew it well" (128). Ursula voices the problem with Birkin's attack on humanity—the fact that he does not believe in love—and thus exposes his contradictory fervor, asking, "Then why do you care about people at all?" (129). Beyond its evocation of the central characters' insularity, as well as its hint at their eventual plan to abandon all aspects of their former lives, the chapter serves as an important turning point in the reader's interaction with the narrative voice. As demonstrated above, the chapter places a great demand upon the reader as he or she tries to discern not only what the characters are saying but also whose views are ultimately superior. Ostensibly, Ursula's probing questions establish her as the voice of reason, her interjections the checks that balance Birkin's convoluted theories, but, the narrator coerces the reader to side with Birkin.

As the characters continue to dialogize Lawrence's theme of the struggle for verbal

consciousness, the narrator emerges to legitimize Birkin's concerns as they come under Ursula's attack. In the chapter, Birkin's seriousness remains relatively comedic as she, "instantly spotting the insecurity underlying his insistence" (Miko 267), continuously prods him during his tirade, half-mockingly encouraging him. Lawrence writes, "'But,' she objected, 'you'd be dead yourself, so what good would it do you?'" (127). Unlike Gerald who pompously ignores Birkin's condescending rants, Ursula plays along because of her greater empathy with his struggle; however, by no means does the narrator allow her to completely dominate. With his slanted report of her "feminine, demoniacal soul," "diabolical knowledge," and repeated "mocking" (128-29), the narrative voice favors Birkin. While Birkin may overstate and is thus often subject to mockery, the narrator's shift in tone to describe, here, the malevolent Ursula, authorizes the former's theories, undercutting the reader's potential dismissal of him. Lawrence suggests that Birkin's passionate search for self-definition—through verbalization—is a worthy struggle. No matter his naivety, as Miko says, "it represents a real integration of attitude which makes experience of the ultimate at least possible" (270). Ursula arguably emerges as the most reasonable character in the novel, but, Lawrence's narrator complicates this assumption, implying that both must yield to the other in order to accomplish their mutual goals.

The chapter serves as a prime example of one of Lawrence's scenes that critics tend to read with "great solemnity, missing the humor that is surely present." To the author's credit, "his alter ego Birkin is effectively mocked, even while straining toward his most Lawrentian pronouncements" (Miko 266). Miko points toward the text's heteroglossia, Lawrence's deliberate employment of a multitude of voices that, in their interaction, determine the relative value of the novel's various, presented ideals. Bakhtin writes, "It is as if the author has no

language of his own, but does possess his own style, his own organic and unitary law governing the way he plays with languages and the way his own real semantic and expressive intentions are refracted within them” (311). In “An Island,” the narrator plays a pivotal role in Lawrence’s ability to manifest his apparent intention for the chapter’s ultimate significance. Despite the conflict of Ursula’s and Birkin’s rivaling voices, the narrator interjects to inform the reader that the process by which they are moving toward a more articulate future, through their very engagement in conversation, is a worthy one. The problem for Birkin goes beyond his complete rejection of traditional, romantic love; for both he and Ursula, the greater concern is if it is possible to verbalize exactly what they want for themselves in order to find common ground.

The chapter’s climax arrives in a third-person report of a “beam of understanding” (130) that occurs between the two. Lawrence writes:

He looked up at her. He saw her face strangely enkindled, as if suffused from within by a powerful sweet fire. His soul was arrested in wonder. She was enkindled in her own living fire. Arrested in wonder and in pure, perfect attraction, he moved towards her. She sat like a strange queen, almost supernatural in her glowing smiling richness. (130)

In the context of the chapter, the profundity of the passage is clear. Lawrence abruptly takes up Doherty’s “lexicon of the occult,” Ursula portrayed obscurely as a “strange queen” of the “supernatural,” alongside his metaphor of fire to depict their growing attraction. His lyricism indicates, for the reader, that this moment of recognition between the two is important. Yet, his rhetorical method, with its ambiguous metaphorizing, also reinforces the narrative’s own inability to express. The narrator calls attention to the text’s own struggle, as it were, to capture their moment of connection. Doherty asserts that these shifts in tone “create a hermeneutic

fuzziness around the represented events” which “exploits...[the] absence of explanatory force, translating narrator and reader into uncomprehending beholders of erotic transmogrifications whose purport resists hermeneutic appropriation” (149). Beyond its metafictional commentary, the passage shifts the chapter’s focus away from the world of the mind and toward the physical, intimating that Birkin’s spirituality must find a place in the physical world if his union with Ursula is to happen. These ruptures in the narrative are always set into effect by the narrator, and here he exemplifies the very critique that Birkin expounds upon moments later.

The shift in the narrative voice signals Birkin’s culminating statement on love, one that reads with unexpected clarity. Lawrence writes, “‘The point about love,’ he said, his consciousness quickly adjusting itself, ‘is that we hate the word because we have vulgarized it. It ought to be proscribed, tabooed from utterance, for many years, till we get a new, better idea’” (130). Once again, Lawrence foregrounds his critique of language at the center of the chapter’s climax. For Birkin, the concern is “whether being can flow through the hardened arteries of a socialized language” (Stewart 104), and Ursula, also struggling toward verbal consciousness, conclusively agrees with him. The narrator continues to emphasize Lawrence’s distrust in words and subtly infuses the chapter with a greater examination that transcends its immediate, significant plot function, that of the development of his protagonists’ relationship. The conflict between their opposing ideologies is momentarily suspended as Lawrence’s narrator concentrates on their mutual agreement—that their future depends upon a more articulate form of language with which they can communicate. Stewart’s and other critics’ readings of the chapter insist upon the way in which Birkin’s aggrandized speeches actually enact the very dogma that he preaches, the fact that language tends to “turn natural facts into artificial concepts” (Stewart 104).

Lawrence's characters dialogize the concern, sometimes with parodic effect, but, as evident in "An Island," the narrator justifies Birkin's words, however idealistic they may be, and ensures that the voicing of both of the protagonists' concerns is at least a step toward their ultimate attainment of verbal consciousness. The sense that the text itself is still working through its own struggle to articulate is also apparent in the narrator's ambiguous, yet significant shifts in tone as he too endeavors to narrate the events before him.

In "Water-Party," Lawrence insists even more emphatically upon the narrative's questioning of language as Ursula conclusively resolves that "words themselves do not convey meaning" (186). Here, the narrator eloquently describes her reaction to Birkin when he compares his ideal love to the experience of reincarnation, his speech prompted by the sudden death of Diana Crich. He says, "it is more than life itself... One is delivered over like a naked infant in the womb, all the old defences and the old body gone, and new air around one, that has never been breathed before" (186). In an almost exact duplication of the narrator's report of Ursula's "prescience" of the future in "Sisters," Birkin describes their greater journey of development, like infants in the womb, which the couple undergoes toward verbal consciousness. As if Birkin's fetal metaphor registers directly in Ursula's mind, evoking her earlier feeling recorded by the narrator, she experiences a moment of breakthrough. In the chapter, the significance of Lawrence's narrator becomes clearer as his earlier accounts converge with Birkin's speeches. For the duration of the novel, the dynamic relationship between his voice and those of the protagonists' sustains Lawrence's critique of the efficacy of language, allowing him to dialogize the concern as well as to initiate the beginning of his protagonists' intimate relationship. As they come to decisively realize and accept their mutual struggles for articulation, Ursula and Birkin, as

well as the reader, are compelled to strive for a reality beyond language. Lawrence's narrator extends the struggle for verbal consciousness to include a language that accounts for experiences of both sexual and spiritual transcendence, which aptly emerges alongside the characters' first physical encounter.

"Water-Party," beyond its portrayal of Ursula's and Birkin's struggles for articulation, encapsulates all of the novel's major themes. With the death of Gerald's sister, a significant portion of the chapter is dedicated to characterizing his and Gudrun's sadomasochistic relationship as it escalates towards death. Lawrence also alludes to the intense, yet ultimately unfulfilled attraction between Birkin and Gerald at the episode's end. Amid the climactic action of "Water-Party," however, Lawrence persists in his metafictional commentary through the thoughts and dialogues of Ursula and Birkin. Here, their inner ruminations are not directly quoted, but are mediated by the narrator. Lawrence writes, "She listened, making out what he said. She knew, as well as he knew, that words themselves do not convey meaning, that they are but a gesture we make, a dumb show like any other. And she seemed to feel his gesture through her blood, and she drew back" (186). Ursula's inclusive "we" alludes to the characters' earlier critique of the empty, socialized language with which humanity is forced to communicate and invites the reader to share her point; however, the moment is also revelatory for the character because she recognizes the ultimate futility of Birkin's words, a "dumb show" that is of little consequence in their struggle to connect. It is Ursula's body, an unspeakable, impulsive feeling in her "blood," that keeps her engaged. Once again, she exposes Birkin's contradiction, "gravely" asking, "But...didn't you say you wanted something that was *not* love—something beyond love?" (186). Unlike Birkin's unyielding response to Ursula's prying in "An Island," her question

prompts him to reconsider his theory. The narrator's subsequent account of his thought-stream indicates that Birkin acknowledges that he cannot "taboo" the word from utterance, that in order to experience love with Ursula, he must find a way to verbalize it. Lawrence suggests that to attain verbal consciousness requires the creation of a language that can effectively capture feelings of both physical and spiritual transcendence. In the end, he maintains that the struggle itself, however futile it may be, is enough.

Birkin initiates his and Ursula's first physical experience by kissing her, which "surprise[s] her extremely" (186). Lawrence situates the climactic moment directly after Birkin's lengthy rumination on the "confusion of speech" (186), implying that their relationship now depends increasingly upon communication beyond verbal articulation. He writes:

He turned in confusion. There was always confusion in speech. Yet it must be spoken.

Whichever way one moved, if one were to move forwards, one must break a way through.

And to know, to give utterance, was to break a way through the walls of the prison, as the infant in labour strives through the walls of the womb. There is no movement now,

without the breaking through of the old body, deliberately, in knowledge, in the struggle to get on. (186)

In a variety of ways, the passage summarizes the entire novel. Birkin's realization of the *need* for the struggle for articulation is literally performed as his proceeding thoughts extend the ongoing metaphor of birth and creation. The womb, with its hindering "integuments," serves a fitting image of the way in which "old" words act as obstacles, impeding the individual's movement toward a "new," more authentic way of being, that accounts for the inadequacy of language. Birkin's physical conception of a psychological battle alludes to the author's belief that

sensations of the body and spirit are the “promptings of our true fate, which it is our business to fulfill. A fate dictated from outside, from theory or from circumstances, is a false fate” (485). Lawrence assures that the struggle itself is adequate, that those who adamantly “fix themselves in old ideas, will perish with the new life strangled unborn within them” (486). The novel’s foreword emphasizes the spirit of the battle, and Birkin’s thoughts reiterate Lawrence’s plea for the individual’s engagement with “his unborn needs” (485).

Like the narrator, Birkin resorts to the metaphor of birth to describe the breakthrough he strives for, simultaneously enacting and conveying his point. Jones emphasizes that this particular imagery and language, here used by Birkin, abounds in the novel and allows Lawrence to “assert the need for the breaking of bounds, the flight from imprisonment...The sense of constraint extends to the lives of the novel’s protagonists, who...articulate potential ways of breaking free” (205). She continues, “Prison for Birkin is not a question of his own set of circumstances; it represents the whole society—the pattern of life as he knows it—which must be destroyed” (213). The language of imprisonment proves a heteroglossic tool in the novel. This particular vocabulary is employed by the protagonists in their spoken and unspoken speeches, allowing Lawrence to characterize the confinement of their “old” lives while simultaneously dialogizing his greater theory. Beyond his characters, it applies to all of humanity “now,” and to breakthrough requires the integration of the physical and the spiritual—a more articulate semiotic that can account for both kinds of feelings. As Birkin winds the iron handle of the sluice, Ursula hears the “booming noise of a great body of water falling solidly all the time. It occupied the whole of the night, this great steady booming of water, everything was drowned within it, drowned and lost” (185). The sounds of the night increasingly irritate Ursula—she “could not

bear the terrible crushing boom of escaping water” (185). The narrator expresses her momentary disgust as Birkin works “mechanically like a slave,” and she looks away and “put[s] her hands over her ears” (185). The narrator continues to affirm Birkin’s linguistic association with the mind which, from Ursula’s perspective, is a form of imprisonment. After Birkin’s lengthy speech, she touches him with a “loving impulse” and says, “Isn’t it strange...how we always talk like this!” (187). Her inability to theoretically or metaphorically discuss her prescience of the future, unlike Birkin, is in accordance with her character, so the narrator again takes over—it is she who “feel[s] his gesture through her blood” (186). The narrator’s descriptions, as the novel continues, are more and more in line with Lawrence’s complementary model as he associates Ursula with a bodily semiotic. Birkin, trapped in his world of words, will need to incorporate her form of physical communication in his journey toward verbal consciousness.

Lawrence’s subsequent portrayal of the protagonists’ physical connection in “Water-Party” recalls his narrator’s earlier description of Ursula, the “strange queen,” and Birkin when they experience the moment of recognition in “An Island.” “To show him she was no shallow prude,” Ursula returns Birkin’s advances with “fierce kisses of passion” (187). The narrator emerges with a third-person account of Birkin’s response that echoes his more usual style of rendering Ursula’s thought-stream. The methodology dialogically merges the characters as their relationship grows. Lawrence writes:

And soon he was a perfect hard flame of passionate desire for her. Yet in the small core of the flame was an unyielding anguish of another thing... Then, satisfied and shattered, fulfilled and destroyed, he went home away from her, drifting vaguely through the darkness, lapsed into the old fire of burning passion. Far, far away, there seemed to be a

small lament in the darkness. But what did it matter? What did it matter, what did anything matter save this ultimate and triumphant experience of physical passion, that had blazed up anew like a new spell of life. “I was becoming quite dead-alive, nothing but a word-bag,” he said in triumph, scorning his other self. Yet somewhere far off and small, the other hovered. (188-89)

Birkin’s feeling, portrayed as a “perfect hard flame of passionate desire,” is an appropriate example of one of Lawrence’s supposed “badnesses” that Fleishman defends him against. He writes, “Lawrence’s worldwide questing and his experiments in sifting and synthesizing various languages in his narration may be seen as an engaged campaign to engender a new language—to answer the question, how shall mankind speak when all the languages have been debased?” (169). Like Miko, Fleishman attributes Lawrence’s innovations to his ultimate concern with the very medium of his art, his resolution to interject the struggle for articulation itself, “a very great part of life,” into his narratives. In fact, Lawrence himself defends his use of this very language, as he says of the novel, “In point of style, fault is only found with the continual, slightly modified repetition. The only answer is that it is natural to the author: and that every natural crisis in emotion or passion or understanding comes from this pulsing, frictional to-and-fro, which works up in culmination” (486). His note on repetition explicates the passage in question, as the narrator again uses his metaphor of fire to depict Birkin’s attraction, and his “new spell of life” is also in line with Ursula’s “supernatural” (130) glow in “An Island.” Lawrence employs such mystical language to describe their physical desires for each other, once again evoking their move toward a life beyond verbal articulation in which Birkin’s spirituality can join with Ursula’s physicality.

Birkin, a self-proclaimed “word-bag,” seems to realize the constraints of his tendency to overarticulate. Prompted by his physical experience with Ursula, he struggles to reconcile his “extreme desire” for her, “the old blood beat[ing] up in him” (187), with his “unyielding anguish for another thing” (187). The narrator dialogically describes Birkin’s sexual desire, as well as develops Lawrence’s ongoing casting of him as all mental, his tendency to conceive of the struggle for verbal consciousness as completely personal and spiritual. In the wake of his newfound physical connection with Ursula, Birkin questions and appears to reject his “old” self, yet, the narrator assures, “somewhere far off and small, the other hovered.” The narrative aside contributes to the reader’s expectancy in relation to the protagonists, as Birkin’s “unyielding anguish of another thing” reveals his lingering fear of giving in completely and losing that “far off and small” remnant of himself. In effect, the slant in the scene indicates, for the reader, that another linguistic struggle will occur between the characters. Bakhtin writes, “This interaction, this dialogic tension between the two languages and two belief systems, permits authorial intention to be realized in such a way that we can acutely sense their presence at every point in the work” (314). As Birkin scorns his former self, it appears that the couple’s problem may be resolved in that they can communicate their love through the bodily articulation of their sexuality, rather than through words. The narrator’s belief system, however, suggests that the solution must still account for both languages, that of the body and of the mind. Lawrence, in allowing Birkin to speak, continues to develop his ongoing theories of life and of verbal consciousness that stand on their own, as the character, “trying to save the world” (128), mentally works through the struggle, demonstrating that “any man of real individuality tries to know and to understand what is happening, even in himself, as he goes along” (485). Furthermore, the

narrator instructs the reader in how to approach this moment in the narrative, prefacing Birkin's breakthrough with his insistent language: "But what did it matter? What did it matter, what did anything matter save this ultimate and triumphant experience of physical passion." The narrative voice confirms the importance of their physical communication, but his report of Birkin's "small lament" also foreshadows the eventual merging of his spirituality with Ursula's physicality, thus refracting Lawrence's greater intent for his characters' plight.

In "Excuse," as the title suggests, the protagonists entirely submit themselves to the journey toward their "new" life. Here, they resolve to break ties with the respective influences in their lives—for Ursula, Gudrun, and for Birkin, Hermione, his "spiritual bride" (306). While their combative dialogue in the chapter allows them to work through their differences, Lawrence's narrator, in his voicing of Birkin's subsequent, interior reflection, reveals that the protagonist does give in to Ursula and, furthermore, that she embodies an ideal that Lawrence wants to fuse with Birkin's spirituality. In his rendering of Birkin's free indirect thought, the narrator characterizes Ursula as "the perfect Womb, the bath of birth, to which all men must come" (309). In his mind, Birkin dismisses her as equally "horrible" as Hermione, who he personifies as the "perfect Idea" (309). Despite his reluctance, however, the narrator's third-person report later confirms that Birkin, like "an infant" (310), chooses Ursula, suggesting that her "way of emotional intimacy—emotional and physical" (309), prevails. Doherty writes, "Ursula's ruthless inquisition, her fierce accusatory tactics, expose Birkin's latent pathologies... Her aggressive denunciation in turn triggers his abject confession" (148). As the critic points out, Birkin's voice cannot compete with Ursula's in the scene, but, the narrator insinuates that his submission is not out of mere acquiescence, but is out of a delight that he

experiences in the conflict. Lawrence writes, “His mind was sweetly at ease, the life flowed through him as from some new fountain, he was as if born out of the cramp of the womb” (311). Given the volatile exchange moments earlier, Birkin’s sense of peace, the “cramp” he has overcome, derives from their verbal confrontation. Miko notes Ursula’s similar behavior when they stop at the inn for tea, that she, “too, loses her aggressiveness” (272). Sargent and Watson write:

Both Ursula and Birkin have found precisely the kind of partner they need and want, the exact reverse of a docile or demure pepper pot, the kind of dialogical other who can be counted on to startle one into change and to defy one’s inertia, the kind of partnership, built on respect for otherness as well as commonality, on which one could begin to found not only a family or community, but perhaps even a state. (432)

The sense that the protagonists are ready to construct their new “state” based upon their “otherness,” their acceptance of, and their engagement with, each other’s faults, depends upon Lawrence’s narrator. In the chapter, his sudden, ambiguous ruptures in tone and character representation demonstrate, as the critics allude to, Bakhtin’s heteroglossia. In the novel, this proves not only a narrative method, but a democratic theory upon which the characters can model their relationship. As Lawrence brings them together in union, he emphasizes Ursula’s and Birkin’s differences in order to highlight their complementary balance to one another.

The protagonists’ breakthrough makes way for a sexual encounter that has engendered a long history of critical debate, and the narrator struggles to relay the awe-inspiring event before him. Lawrence writes:

Unconsciously, with her sensitive finger-tips, she was tracing the back of his thighs,

following some mysterious life-flow there. She had discovered something, something more than wonderful, more wonderful than life itself. It was the strange mystery of his life-motion, there, at the back of his thighs, down the flanks. It was a strange reality of his being, the very stuff of being, there in the straight downflow of the thighs. It was here she discovered him one of the Sons of God such as were in the beginning of the world, not a man, something other, something more. (313)

Adopting a myriad of genres of speech in his account, the narrator's voice in the chapter proves heteroglossic as he strives to convey a narrative that undermines the grounds of its own narratability. His vocabulary of mystery, the "strange fountains of his body," "the floods of ineffable darkness and ineffable riches," alongside his abundant use of neologisms, "life-flow," "life-force," "life-source," "mystically-physically," demonstrates his groping for a new language that can accurately capture the profundity of the moment. Miko writes, "Precisely what Ursula and Birkin are going through eludes strict definition, but it is at least clear that it is something neither has experienced before...Ursula's religious quest is being fulfilled, just as Birkin's hunger for the free experience of the beyond is about to be fulfilled" (272-73). His point affirms the sense of harmony that the two move toward in the chapter, but, Miko claims that Lawrence's description "almost works," that he "seems to have overestimated the flooding force of his prose. Transcendental forces cannot be convincingly located at the back and base of the loins...Even the slightest attempt to visualize this place brings bathos" (273). His accusation appears to be directed at Lawrence who, in his strained rendering of this "inhuman" experience, comes up short; however, the narrator's overarticulation points toward the characters' journey toward achieving a language that can capture moments of transcendence.

The narrator's leaps, "from the mundane to the mystical, the personal to the archetypal, the pragmatic to the transcendental" (Doherty 149), allow him to come closest to capturing the *need* for the struggle to articulate, as well as the inherent ambiguity of Lawrence's scene at the inn. Bakhtin writes, "Each of these genres possesses its own verbal and semantic forms for assimilating various aspects of reality. The novel, indeed, utilizes these genres precisely because of their capacity, as well-worked-out forms, to assimilate reality in words" (321). While the narrator's efforts may be bathetic, he nonetheless demonstrates that the characters' ultimate goal requires their negotiation of both linguistic and physical forms of communication. The narrative voice's language alludes to this integration, and the balance lies in the union of Birkin, the "Son of God," and his mindfulness, and Ursula, the "perfect Womb," and her physicality. Of course, the narrator resorts to a traditional gender cliché in his characterization, thus indicating that, like the protagonists, he is still working within cultural constraints toward a more effective form of articulation.

Critics tend to view "Excuse" as the climax of Ursula's and Birkin's journey toward verbal consciousness. The novel's later chapters, set in the Alps, primarily revolve around the plights of Gudrun and Gerald. In "Continental," however, Lawrence persists in characterizing the lifelong battle ahead of the protagonists when it comes to words. We find that their journey, although promising, appears unresolved at the novel's end. The narrator's reports of Ursula's thought-streams suggest that her journey requires a literal, physical excuse, hence her repeated beseeching of Birkin to go abroad. Lawrence opens the chapter: "Ursula went on in an unreal suspense, the last weeks before going away. She was not herself—she was not anything. She was something that is going to be—soon—soon—very soon. But as yet, she was only imminent"

(387). As the couple makes their way via ship, Ursula feels her soul begin to stir “to awake from its anaesthetic sleep” (387). Throughout, the narrator takes up two distinct styles of speeches in his depiction of the two, vacillating between a cosmological language in relation to Birkin, “a meteorite plunging across the chasms between worlds,” and a language of becoming, again, in regard to Ursula, as she senses that “the unrealised world ahead triumphed everything” (388). The distinction continues to illustrate the grandiosity of Birkin’s vision for them, as if their love can redeem all of humanity, if not the cosmos, when achieved. Ursula, on the other hand, embodies the individual’s groping, the daily need for the struggle, on a smaller scale. Dialogically, Lawrence prolongs their journey, indicating that their attainment of “consciousness” in “Excuse,” as Doherty says, is not enough; in order to wholly achieve their new, more authentic life, the characters must continue to engage with the struggle throughout the remainder of their lived experiences. In accordance with Lawrence’s belief that “there is no such thing as an infallible pattern of fulfillment, in any realm whatsoever” (Miko 288), the novel leaves their story open-ended.

When the protagonists arrive at the train platform, Lawrence’s third-person description of the landscape and people, while realistic, is filled with metaphoric language. At Ostend, the narrator reports:

They stood up and looked ahead. Low lights were seen down the darkness. This was the world again. It was not the bliss of her heart, nor the peace of his. It was the superficial unreal world of fact. Yet not quite the old world. For the peace and the bliss in their hearts was enduring....Everybody was hurrying with a blind, insect-like intentness through the dark grey air, porters were calling in unEnglish English...their colourless

blouses looking ghostly as they disappeared; Ursula stood at a long, low, zinc-covered barrier, along with hundreds of other spectral people...(389)

The narrator's panoramic view of the terminal figures the characters at the center of the mass of people, underscoring the dead, mechanical, "spectral" world that will continue to impede upon their journey. Ursula and Birkin stand out in contrast, their "peace and bliss" at odds with the "superficial unreal world of fact" around them, as if they are "disembarking from the Styx into the desolated underworld" (389). The fantastic language of the scene, the people rendered as insects and ghosts, speaking "unEnglish," echoes Lawrence's ongoing critique of modernized society as well as its empty language, but it also informs his final statement upon Ursula's and Birkin's plights. "Not quite the old world," the narrator insists that the strides the protagonists have made will at least give them the possibility to prevail. His heteroglossic language fades into one, distinct voice, now, to describe the two in union, "at peace...in this final transit out of life" (388). In the face of this "desolation everywhere" (389), the narrative portrays Ursula and Birkin as a unit for the duration of the novel, underscoring not their differences, but their mutuality that will allow them to overcome the "old" world in which they inhabit.

Nevertheless, at the novel's end, Ursula resumes her challenge of Birkin, proving that she will enable him to engage in the struggle so long as they are together. Upon Gerald's death, he voices his desire for "eternal union with a man too," which she says is "false, impossible" (481). Lawrence dialogizes his notion, as stated in the foreword, that "*the passionate struggle into conscious being*" (485), the same struggle the protagonists' attempt to verbalize, is constant—that without it, the individual "will perish with the new life strangled unborn within them" (485). For the author, the struggle for verbal consciousness is always evolving, and thus Ursula's and

Birkin's journey, at the novel's end, remains seemingly unfinished.

The complex dynamic of Lawrence's narrative model in *Women in Love*, particularly in the dialogized voices of his protagonists and his narrator, demonstrates the author's conscious manipulation of voice and perspective as a means of expressing his theories. The narrator plays a significant role in the dialogical model as his voice allows Lawrence to incorporate the struggle for articulation into his very art. He furthers the novel's development of Ursula's and Birkin's journey as well as exposes the text's own struggle to narrate the thoughts and feelings that the protagonists themselves deem inexpressible. Much more than a "mere witness" to the novel's unfolding events, the narrator's verbalization of their climactic experiences enables the reader to perceive the significance of their plights, as well as to conceive of Lawrence's mistrust in words as immediate to reality, beyond the story world. The novel's narrative style not only anticipates the trends of Lawrence's later work, but it also solidifies his understanding of voice and its potential in the novel as a genre. Sargent and Watson write, "This is the Lawrence more readers should know about, the Lawrence who belongs with figures like Buber, Levinas, Bakhtin, and Irigaray in our evolving history of the dialogical principle and in our continuing attempt to understand the dialogical and its political and ethical importance" (432). A thorough consideration of *Women in Love*'s narrator and his various functions reveals Lawrence's novelistic genius in the Bakhtinian sense. Furthermore, his dialogization of the struggle for verbal consciousness confirms his intentional striving for breakthroughs in narrative both for the sake of art and in behalf of his theories of life.

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