

SOME BAKHTINIAN DEPLOYMENTS

The concept of the carnivalesque, as suggested by Stallybrass and White, has far-reaching repercussions for the analysis of cultural politics in general. The historian Natalie Zemon Davis in "The Reasons of Misrule", an essay in Society and Culture in Early Modern France, for instance, examines the uses of popular festivals and the ways in which they can contribute to social renewal. Her scholarship thus becomes a program to revive the lost voices of the illiterate and the downtrodden from the past. The anthropologist James Clifford in "On Ethnographic Authority", similarly, invokes Bakhtin and argues for a full recounting of the plurivocality of social reality which is still ignored in ethnographic descriptions.

In literary criticism the schema of the carnivalesque has generated critical articles on authors as diverse as Beckett (Van Buuren: 1983), Nashe (Jones: 1983), Thoreau (Schueller: 1986), Twain (Ballorain: 1982) - to give but a few examples. The relevance of

Bakhtin has also found fertile ground in the study of Joyce, whose Ulysses and Finnegans Wake are rich in the dialogic conflict of various speech genres represented and parodied in the novels (Lodge: 1982; Parrinder: 1984).

Ballorain's study of Twain also combines a feminist approach in delineating the role of polarity in Twain's Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc. Wayne Booth was one of the first to critique Bakhtin's failure to address feminist issues (Booth: 1986, first appeared in 1981). The absence of feminine voices in the dialogue, despite Bakhtin's praiseworthy notion of polyphony, and his neglect of the open, parodic, modernist novels which are so close to his scheme has come in for extended criticism. Thus, Sheryl Stevenson in her Ph.D. dissertation "The Never-Last Word: Parody, Ideology, and the Open Work" provides a feminist revision of Bakhtin's carnivalesque mode in treating Djuna Barnes's Ryder:

While imitating the Rabelaisian manner, Barnes parts company with Bakhtin's carnivalesque, by questioning Wendell's (and implicitly Bakhtin's) positive view of the grotesque body and its movement down to earth. Ryder thus includes all the defining features of the carnivalesque mode:

degradation, the grotesque body, cyclical process, ambivalence, and contradiction (conflating womb and grave, life-giving and death-tending processes). Yet by considering these elements from the standpoint of women the emphasis falls differently - not on fecund abundance and utopian becoming, but inescapable ~~and~~ decay, pain, debasement, and death. As one female character remarks, Wendell "paints a rosy picture ... of polygamy for - ... the man" (49). Barnes's "female Tome Jones" then stages the spectacle of Wendell's uncrowning, a carnivalesque degradation effected largely by the novel's women. Bringing idealization of sexuality down to the womb-grave of the female body, Ryder illustrates a peculiarly female carnivalesque, and one that also uncrowns Bakhtin as carnival king of a "rosy" physicality.

(Stevenson 1986: 77-78)

Making use of Bakhtin's framework of heteroglossia and dialogism, Patricia Yaeger examines the tensions resulting from an adaptation of phallogocentric discourse

to feminocentric expression in Eudora Welty's The Golden Apples. Thus, the expropriation of William Butler Yeats's themes and imagery by Welty is seen as useful plagiarism, as an ideological strategy to accentuate the concerns of her female characters. But, Yaeger observes, although Bakhtin supplies a useful grid, his

method fails to consider the category of gender as a potent source for the dialogic tension characteristic of the novel as genre. Viewed from this perspective Welty's writing is more subversive than many of her critics have perceived, while Bakhtin's insights into the nature of novelistic discourse are useful in describing the restructuring of tradition that occurs in women's texts. Bakhtin's ideas must be understood and amplified, however, in the light of recent feminist theory.

(Yaeger 1984: 857)

Bakhtin's translinguistics - the discipline that probably would correspond to what is now known as

pragmatics, which studies stable non-individual forms of discourse - is beginning to have an impact on traditional linguistics in the recognition that linguistic structures cannot be analyzed apart from how those structures are used by people in real circumstances. Paul Thibault, for instance, is able to trace parallels between dialogism and Michael Halliday's discourse analysis (Thibault 1984). Bakhtin's ideas about language are also central to his critique of Freudian psychology in that he argues that language precedes the unconscious, which makes the psyche a social phenomenon embodying dialogical processes. Susan Stewart has highlighted the two major peaks of Bakhtin's rereading of Freud. His critique, first,

substantially predicts Jaques Lacan's reformulation of Freudianism in light of linguistic theory, particularly the translation of the unconscious into a form of language.

(Stewart 1986: 49)

And secondly, it

stresses the shaping power of the specific dialogic situation of the psychoanalytic interview.

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Julia Kristeva's and Carol Bove's articles are other instances of the linking of Bakhtin with Lacanian psychoanalysis (Kristeva: 1973; Bove: 1983).

The theological ramifications of dialogism have not been left unexplored. The religious nature of the unfinished and **recently** translated "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity" seems to have influenced Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist's biography of Bakhtin to the point that the dialogic is erected as an opposing category to all monologic systems of belief. Nina Perlina has articulated dialogism with Martin Buber's I-and-Thou principle (Perlina: 1984). The spiritualizing of Bakhtin reaches its zenith perhaps in David Patterson's recent book Literature and Spirit: Essays on Bakhtin and his Contemporaries. Introducing his subject, Patterson observes:

Operating from a generally religious and distinctly Christian viewpoint, Bakhtin embraces the Johanne concept of the word and regards the dialogical dimensions of literature as a revelation of spirit...

(Patterson 1988: 3)

Bakhtin's poetics of fiction has perhaps elicited the most promising response. While Michel Aucoutourier, Eva Correodor, Jonathan Hall, Prabhakara Jha, and others are concerned with the relation of Bakhtin to Lukacs' theory of the novel, Wayne Booth, Don Bialostosky, and M. Pierrette Malcuzyński are chiefly interested in deriving Bakhtin's contribution to narratology. (Aucoutourier: 1983; Correodor: 1983; Hall: 1984-5; Jha: 1985; Booth: 1983; Bialostosky: 1983, 1985; Malcuzyński: 1983). Speculating about the future of novel criticism by pitting Booth's rhetoric of fiction (his ahistorical treatment of forms) against the socio-historical dialogues of Bakhtin, Bialostosky rightly hazards that after Bakhtin:

Formally, we will have to talk more about how an imitation of discourse rather than action finds that degree of wholeness it embodies. Historically, we will want to discuss novelistic discourses as both responses to and provocation of other social discourses. Theoretically, we may find ourselves reexamining novel criticism itself as a response to and a continuation of novelistic discourse.

(Bialostosky 1985: 216)

Henry James's and Percy Lubbock's famous opposition of 'telling versus showing' is concerned with the bare relation of speech event to its narrated event. This static category designating the relation (i.e., relation of speech event to narrated event) is opposed to the more active shifting of the "evidential" where the shifting import of the narrated event is accounted for by cataloguing the relation of the report about that event to the primary speech act itself. Bakhtin's essay on reported speech (Volosinov 1973: 115-) and his "Discourse Typology in Prose" (in Matejka and Pomorska 1971: 176-96) present lengthy and complete catalogues of the kinds of relations possible together with their usual effects. He treats literary discourse as dialogue with the reader on the one hand and with other literary works on the other. Features such as imitation, parody, stylization, and reinforcement are fully analyzed in these essays.

(The question of narrative discourse, of author and other will be dealt at length in the last two chapters. Bakhtin's importance in present-day narratology will also be pointed out in the succeeding chapter when I attempt to juxtapose him alongside Wayne Booth of

The Rhetoric of Fiction fame.)

The openness of discourse in the novel that Bakhtin argues for is part of his valorized schema of unfinalizability in texts. In enacting it in his own works, in eschewing any closure, Bakhtin has left vast spaces open for infinite possibilities of dialogue. The rereadings and revisionary appropriations currently on view constitute part of that dialogue.