MIKHAIL BAKHTIN'S THEORIES : RECEPTION, REVISIONS,(RE)READINGS, AND (RE)DEPLOYMENTS

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to my parents

because, wanting connections, we found connections - always, everywhere, and between everything. The world exploded into a whirling network of kinships, where everything pointed to everything else, everything explained everything else ...

Umberto Eco
Foucault's Pendulum
1990: 384

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POSTFACE

Though with an epilogue and subsequently wrought postface, this effort is far from exhaustive. My attempt has been to leave the discussion openended, to avoid closure. It is just one foray into the myriad possibilities of dialogue that Bakhtin sets up. The thesis is not even rounded out in that I could not take stock of some very recent studies in the area like the New Accents issue on Dialogism by Holquist; Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film by Robert Stam; Rethinking Bakhtin: Extensions and Challenges edited by Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson; Bakhtin and Cultural Theory edited by Ken Hirschkop and David Shepherd; etc. All of these, I am sure, have a bearing on my arguments: perhaps they anticipate me, perhaps they even derail views that I subscribe to. But then I look on a Ph.D. dissertation as nothing but a training for further, more durable, work.

INTRODUCTION : RECEPTION

> The process of re-accentuation is enormously significant in the history of literature. Every age re-accentuates in its own way the works of its most immediate past. The historical life of classic works is in fact the uninterrupted process of their social and ideological re-accentuation.
> (Bakhtin 1981 : 420-21)

Jacques Derrida's paper "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences", presented at a symposium at John Hopkins University in 1966, virtually inaugurated the advent of a new critical movement in the United States. Deconstruction was launched with a bang; Derrida and Co. (mostly American) soon gave rise to an academic industry. Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1895 - 1975), by contrast, appeared with a whimper on the critical scene. His first recognition in the United States as a thinker of some import came in 1968 when he was grouped with a band of internationally respected theoreticians writing for a special issue of Yale French Studies (No. 41,

September) devoted to the theme of "Game, Play, Literature". Bakhtin's contribution, "The Role of Games in Rabelais", was actually a fragment from Rabelais and His World which had just appeared in Helene Iswolsky's translation. There is "an unmistakable diffidence" (Holquist in Bakhtin 1986 : ix) about the way Bakhtin is introduced in the notes on contributors:

> M. Bakhtin ... is reaching the end of a long career, but only recently have the boldness of his speculation and the breadth of his ideas been appreciated outside the restricted circle of his Russian friends and colleagues.

In the western world, in languages other than Slavic, Bakhtin remained unknown until 1967. In that year, while Julia Kristeva in France wrote a critical account of Bakhtin's Dostoevsky and Rabelais books, elucidating his post-Formalism, stressing his non-static version of a structuralist approach to the study of literature, and recognizing the potential in his implicit formulation of intertextuality, a reviewer in the United States in 1969 was blissfully unaware of the revolutionary nature of

Rabelais and His World. Writing in The New York Review of Books he could observe:

> The Bakhtin method has come up with totally wrong answers.
> (Yates 1969 : 16)

The reviewer of the book in The New York Times Book Review, while not realizing the implications of Bakhtin's work, was nevertheless able to sense its seminal nature:

> At the core of this book, then, past the flabby tissue of vast generalization, past the dense Marxist rhetoric, lies an important and original thesis.
> (Miller 1969 : 36)

After 1973, however, with the appearance in English translation of Volosinov's/Bakhtin's Marxism and the Philosophy of Language a more critical appreciation of the quarrel with his Formalist contemporaries and his contributions to linguistics, semiotics, stylistics, and literary theory in general was being increasingly recognized.[1] Frederic Jameson's penetrating review article on the book in 1974 is a case in point as was Yale University's preparation - forestalled by Bakhtin's death in 1975 - to award him an honorary degree. The

English language publication of Volosinov's/Bakhtin's Freudianism: A Marxist Critique in 1976 and Medvedev's/Bakhtin's The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics in 1978 did not make much of a cumulative impact largely because of the vexed and ambivalent nature of their authorship. The idea of a Bakhtin school, however, gained currency. By the late 70s the trickle of critical articles and monographs had turned into a steady stream. Besides, he had begun to appear frequently in footnotes.

But it was only in the early 80s, which also saw the translation in America of Bakhtin's important essays under the title, The Dialogic Imagination (1981), the retranslation of Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics (1984), and the reissue of Rabelais and His World (1984), that the momentum caught on and opened the floodgates of Bakhtiniana. Churning out of the academic mills were special issues of journals (for instance the Critical Inquiry issue of December 1983 and Studies in Twentieth Century Literature of Fall 1984) on things Bakhtinian, sessions devoted solely to Bakhtin in conferences, a critical biography in 1984, finally the

Bakhtin Newsletter, two issues of which are already out at the time of writing, and a bibliography of and on his works. (Nordquist: 1988)

Bakhtin had arrived. But a thinker who believed that nothing is ever absolutely dead, that every meaning will have its "homecoming festival" someday, still has to wait for his homecoming festival. While the academic boom in Bakhtin testifies to the fact that he is not just another theorist, but a theorist seen by some as offering panaceas for what has been called a "crisis" in criticism ever since deconstruction invaded the portals of academe in America, there is a tendency to use him, to appropriate him in ways that refuse to do full justice to the complexity of his formulations.

My effort in this thesis will be to chart just two strands - strands which I perceive to be the most important - of these appropriations. After giving a short account of the assimilation and deployment of Bakhtin in Anglo-American literary theory and criticism (which will also suggest what he means for feminist criticism, the impact of his 'translinguistics' on traditional linguistics, and his contribution to the poetics of fiction), the body of my essay will concern

itself with the liberal-humanist reception of Bakhtin spearheaded mainly by the Slavicists in American universities. It will then deal with the appeal that Bakhtin's theory of language holds for a Marxist criticism. What unites the two strands is the unease that has been generated by the institutionalization of deconstructive literary theory. The last portion of the dissertation is mainly an attempt to examine critically Bakhtin's formulations concerning the creative act.

In the following pages, however, I will attempt to recapitulate some of the key ideas in Bakhtin's texts and to point out some of the other directions that Bakhtinian criticism has lead to.

Michael Holquist's edition of The Dialogic Imagination and Tzvetan Todorov's Le Principe dialogique (translated as The Dialogical Principle) served to bring forward "dialogic" as a master-category over other competing categories in Bakhtin's conceptual arsenal such as "polyphonic", "heteroglossia", and "carnivalesque". In his notebooks where he reviews his earlier works Bakhtin asks himself the question: what is special, unique, and distinctive about his own work? Nezaverssen-

nost is the word he uses to answer the question. 'Unfinishedness' or 'unfinalizability' is praised as the loophole in any text that generates infinite possibilities of further dialogue. The open-ended text lives because it allows freedom for the reader.

> (N)othing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the future and will always be in the future.
> (Bakhtin 1984: 166)

A thinker of Bakhtin's stature can be expected not to confuse the openness that loophole allows with sheer muddleheadedness. The positive kind of unfinalizability is enacted in his texts (something that has led some critics to call him a confused thinker) and contrasted implicitly with an author's fuzziness and inability to fathom adequately the subject of his choice. When Bakhtin places the novel over the other genres, it is its unfinalizability that he is emphasizing. Dostoevsky is great because he communicates the sense of individual identity as postponed. His characters

> all acutely sense their own inner unfinalizability, their capacity to outgrow, as it were, from within and render untrue any externalization and finalizing definition of them. As long as a person is alive he lives by the fact that he is not yet finalized, that he has not yet uttered his ultimate word ...
>
> A man never coincides with himself. One cannot apply to him the formula of identity A=A. (Bakhtin 1989: 59)

Finally, Bakhtin's concept of nezaversennost remained unfinalized in his texts.

His refusal to systematize was at the heart of his quarrel with the Russian Formalists. Language is always a conglomeration of different "languages", forever vying for hegemony. Official culture constitutes a centripetal, uniformizing force; unofficial culture upsets predictability by exerting a centrifugal force. "Heteroglossia" in other words, is the internal stratification and at the same time interanimation of language so that dialect, sociolect, register, and genre all come into play. Defining the stylistics of the novel, Bakhtin notes:

> The novel orchestrates all its themes, the totality of the world of objects and ideas depicted and expressed in it, by means of the social diversity of speech types (raznorecie) and by the differing individual voices that flourish under such conditions. Authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters are merely those fundamental compositional unities with whose help heteroglossia (raznorecie) can enter the novel; each of them permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships (always more or less dialogized). (Bakhtin 1984: 263)

"Dialogism" is the epistemological form of a heteroglossic world. It is the idea that each utterance is moulded by and becomes meaningful in its directedness towards other utterances. No utterance is undirected. Even if the addressee is not actually present, the dialogic anticipation of response is always already there. Meaning therefore exists in intersubjective communication.

> (L)anguage is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated - overpopulated with the intentions of others. (Bakhtin 1984: 294)

The canonised genres - lyric, epic, tragedy - are monologic in that they seek to establish a single world view. Prose fiction and comedy, contrastingly, are dialogic in that they contain discourses of various types without curbing any of their expressive capacities. Another facet or formulation of the dialogic is Bakhtin's concept of the "polyphonic", which refers to "a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses" in intense relationship with one another. Dostoevsky, unlike Tolstoy, loosens the grip of the authorial discourse and allows other discourses to interact in the text. The novel's dialogicality or polyphony in such cases deconstructs other literary forms. As Terry Eagleton says:

> What Bakhtin has done in fact is to take up the terms drawn up by Georg Lukacs in his Theory of

> the Novel - the epic as lost totality, the novel as doomed to 'transcendental homelessness' - and bodily invert their values.
> (Eagleton 1986: 114-5)

Inversion if also central to Bakhtin's notion of the "carnivalesque". Though, carnival is a specific medieval festival, it may arise, according to Bakhtin, wherever genuine laughter challenges the centripetal, official forces and values of existing norms. Preaching the "joyous relativity" of all things, its spirit is not reformist but parodic, as medieval carnival parodied

> all that was stable, unchanging, perennial: the existing hierarchy, the existing religious political, and moral values, norms, and prohibitions.
> (Bakhtin 1968: 9)

The carnivalesque in his formulation becomes an epistemological category applied synechdochically to the whole of popular culture. Opposed to the classical and the serious, the grotesque abounds because carnival laughter is hostile to the complete, the finalized. The significance of Bakhtin's book on Rabelais, as

Peter Stallybras and Allon White demonstrate in their study on the politics and poetics of transgression,

> is its broad development of the 'carnivalesque' into a potent, populist, critical inversion of all official words and hierarchies in a way that has implications far beyond the specific realm of Rabelais studies.
> (Stallybrass and White 1986: 7)

NOTE

1. The book appears under the name of V. N. Volosinov as does the other work entitled Freudanism: A Marxist Critique. But I will throughout the thesis continue to separate by a slash the author(s) of the disputed texts. The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship will thus be attributed to Medvedev/ Bakhtin. When I refer to "Bakhtin's work" or "Bakhtinian", I am following the convention utilized by I. R. Titunik, who applies the name Bakhtin to refer to the undisputed texts as well as the disputed ones which together form a corpus of writings belonging to the so-called Bakhtin School.

   The question of Bakhtin's role in the composition of the so-called "pseudonymous' works (see Clark & Holquist 1985: 356-57) is still by no means resolved, mainly because of a paucity of factual evidence. Attempts to resolve the question on the basis of Bakhtin's stylistic or intellectual competence are of course vulnerable to charges of self-substantiation. Perlina (1983) and Clark and Holquist (1984; 1985: 146-70) seem to have investigated the most. Even though Perlina's work is based

largely on evidence unearthed by Clark and Holquist, there is still a certain dissonance between the two, particularly where "Medvedev's" book on formalism (1928) is concerned. Their researches in the Soviet Union, which included an interview with Volosinov's widow, have led them to conclude that Volosinov "played only a minor role in the composition of the article 'Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art' and of the book Marxism and the Philosophy of Language. He played a somewhat larger role in Freudianism: A Critical Sketch". (Clark and Holquist 1984: 121-22) They do not hesitate (ibid.: 125) in attributing the whole of Medvedev's Formal Method in Literary Scholarship to Bakhtin, although the matter is not so simple according to Perlina.

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 Nalalie 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 [illegible] 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 phallocentric discourse

to feminocentric expression in Eudora Welty's The Golden Apples. Thus, the expropriation of William Butler Yeat's themes and imagery by Welty is seen as useful plagiarism, as an ideological strategy to accentuate the concerns of her female characters. But, Yaegar 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. (50)

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 Marin 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 Malcuzynski are chiefly interested in deriving Bakhtin's contribution to narratology. (Aucoutourier: 1983; Correodor: 1983; Hall: 1984-5; Jha: 1985; Booth: 1983; Bialostosky: 1983, 1985; Malcuzynski: 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 cateloguing 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 catelogues 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 justapose him alongside Wayne Booth of

<u>The Rhetoric of Fiction</u> 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.

DIALOGISM AND LIBERAL HUMANISTS

This reception of Bakhtin differs quite markedly from the American reception of earlier Russian theorists. As a rule Russian scholars who have anticipated American critical debates have been translated at the point when they had little to add and when they could be credited only with a superfluous priority. Early Formalism from the 1910s and 1920s with its insistence on the autonomy of literary works and literary studies, first became reasonably widely known in America in the 1950s, when New Criticism had long since propounded similar ideas. Later Formalism, with its emphasis on literary history, on the role of the reader, on social institutions, and on the self-conscious development of criticism, came briefly to the fore only in the 1970s, when its dynamic structuralist model was also no longer a radical innovation. By contrast, Bakhtin enters current debate at a time when post-structuralism has prepared the way but has in no sense exhausted or rediscovered all of his most remarkable insights.

(Morson 1986: viii)

In problematizing the relationship between the origin/context/referent of a text and its form, Bakhtin privileges neither of these terms. He refuses to divide the extrinsic and the intrinsic, the individual and society, and self and other, and treat them as opposites. Naive Marxists as well as Formalists are both, therefore, the targets of his attack:

> Only crude mechanistic vestiges can account for the truly clumsy, inert, motionless, and irreversible division between 'intrinsic and extrinsic factors' in the development of ideological phenomena which is rather often encountered in Marxist works on literature and other ideologies. And it is the 'intrinsic factor' which is usually suspected of being insufficiently loyal from the sociological point of view.
> (Medvedev/Bakhtin 1978: 29)

The essence of his argument is to bring the two approaches together in a dialogue that privileges neither:

> The study of verbal art can and must overcome the divorce between an abstract 'formal'

> approach and an equally abstract 'ideological' approach.
> (Bakhtin 1981: 259)

Wayne Booth, a neo-Aristotlean formalist and pluralist, notes in his introduction to the 1984 edition of Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics that Bakhtin's most important contribution, in fact lies in his refusal to dissolve the opposition, a refusal carried out by considering form itself as inherently ideological. Bakhtin, thus challenges, among others, those who see language as

> having no reference to any kind of reality other than itself. Bakhtin is not a naive representationalist, but he never leaves any doubt that for him the languages employed in fictions are to be judged as they succeed or fail in representing our "linguistic" life in its highest forms. On this one point there is simply no way to reconcile what he is up to with much of what is said these days in the name of "deconstruction".
> (Booth in "Introduction" to Bakhtin 1984: xxvi)

What then appeals to Booth is Bakhtin's model of the narrator and the narratee because it reveals the human context and purpose even of objective discourse. He concedes as much to Bakhtin in his afterword to The Rhetoric of Fiction. But he does so with an important difference that separates his narratology from Bakhtin's theory of discourse. Don Bialostosky points out:

> Booth remains insistently Aristotlean in treating language not as the object of imitation but as a means for realizing the object of "characters-in-action", and he regrets that he did not place more emphasis on the primacy of plot in The Rhetoric of Fiction. Bakhtin just as firmly declares that the "main object of (Dostoevsky's) representation is the word itself" understood as the discourse of the ideologist-hero in its responsiveness to the words addressed to it by other characters and by the author's will.
> (Bialostosky 1985: 214)

In short, what we see here is a case of appropriation of Bakhtin that serves the cause of the humanists: in

Booth's view, the human subject, understood as a literary character, in direct contrast to the post-structuralist view, is not decentered by dialogism.[1]

In situating Bakhtin in the moment of post-structuralism the focus of our interest in this chapter will largely be Michael Holquist, not simply because he is one of the most influential expositors of Bakhtin in the United States. More importantly, he represents a mode of appropriation, a liberal-humanist stance, along with Katerina Clark, Caryl Emerson, Gary Saul Morson, and Booth, all of whom perceive Bakhtin's dialogism as a metalinguistic alternative to deconstruction. Bakhtin also provides for them a means for affirming the impact of history on language and form, thereby forestalling any criticism that they are anti-historical.

Clark and Holquist at the beginning of their biography of Bakhtin observe:

> Bakhtin's distinctiveness consists in his invention of a philosophy of language that has immediate application not only to linguistics and stylistics but also to the most urgent concerns of everyday life. It is, in effect,

> an Existentialist philology.
> (Clark & Holquist 1984: 9)

What, however, separates Bakhtin from Heidegger or Sartre (94) is Bakhtin's emphasis on "language as both a cognitive and a social practice" (9). Volosinov/Bakhtin of course makes exactly this point about his linguistics:

> The word is a two-sided act. It is determined equally by whose word it is and for whom it is meant ... A word is territory shared by both addresser and addressee, by the speaker and his interlocutor.
> (Volosinov/Bakhtin 1973: 86)

But "dialogism" and "heteroglossia" refer to a conflictual model of language, where words are not purely lexical but contextualized in a heterogeneous social or ideological field. The word is an utterance. And utterance, Clark and Holquist note, is Bakhtin's word for

> the simultaneity of what is actually said (roughly, its lexical denotation) and what is assumed but not spoken (the limitless connotations that are not only possible but necessary in any speech situation). (207)

Meanings, therefore, cannot be univocally formalized because of the contextual limitlessness of any utterance. (This limitlessness - or rather multiplicity - of context is what has come to be known as Bakhtin's translinguistics. See Todorov 1984: 24-25). Clark and Holquist place Bakhtin's translinguistics against the two currents in the philosophy of language which they call "Personalist" and "Deconstructionist". (11-12) (See also Holquist 1981 and 1986.) While the personalist view has it that "I own meaning" the deconstructive one holds that "no one owns meaning". The distinguishing feature of dialogism, Clark and Holquist claim, is the concept of language as "territory shared". And the political implication of this is that meaning becomes something to be negotiated between parties with different degrees of power. This conception of language, they claim, can be extended into a philosophical principle of architectonics:[2]

> Language invokes the political concept of freedom because language is struggle against the necessity of certain forms. Language is a unitizing noun developed for the action of what is a scattered and powerful array of social

> forces. Whether or not social interaction is conceived as class struggle, social forces are never conceived otherwise than as being in conflict, except in utopias, which is why the word utopian has come to mean "unreal". Bakhtin argues that language is where those struggles are engaged most comprehensively and at the same time most intimately and personally. (220)

In an earlier article, Holquist called this concept of language the "politics of representation". (See Holquist 1981: 163-83).

Dialogism, Clark and Holquist go on to note, applies equally as well to the nature of the psyche since for Bakhtin the self never coincides with itself. His concept of "inner speech" is thus "a dialogue within the psyche". (231) Clark and Holquist are right in emphasizing this point for this is crucial to Bakhtin's revision of Freud in order to arrive at a different notion of the self. "Psyche", he observes, "is located somewhere between the organism and a world that is exterior to it, on the borderline separating these two spheres ... organism and the world meet here in the

sign. Psychic experience is the semiotic expression of the contact between the organisms and the outside environment". (Volosinov/Bakhtin 1973: 26)

Bakhtin's notion that the self is non-coincidental with itself links him with Derrida, particularly the Derrida of "Signature Event Context". The self - deconstructed as a unitary subject - for both of them is understandable in terms of a sign. And

> Every sign, linguistic or nonlinguistic, spoken or written (in the usual sense of this opposition), as a small or large unity, can be <u>cited</u>, put between quotation marks; thereby it can break with every given context, and engender infinitely new contexts in an absolutely nonsaturable fashion. This does not suppose that the mark is not an accident or anomaly, but is that (normal/abnormal) without which a mark could no longer even have a so-called "normal" functioning. (Derrida 1982: 320-21)

Signs, for Bakhtin, are heteroglossic, according to a principle of absolute <u>exotopy</u>, which Paul De Man defines as follows: "far from aspiring to the telos of

a synthesis or a resolution, as could be said to be the case in dialectical systems, the function of dialogism is to sustain and think through the radical exteriority or heterogeneity of one voice with regard to any other"[3]. (De Man 1986: 109) (See also Todorov 1984: 99-100.) The point is that this notion of language, of context having no bounds, takes Bakhtin quite close to deconstruction: in a proto-Derridean fashion, he observes:

> There can be no "contextual meaning in and of itself" - it exists only for another contextual meaning, that is, it exists only in conjunction with it. There cannot be a unified (single) contextual meaning. Therefore there can be neither a first nor a last meaning; it always exists among other meanings as a link in the chain of meaning, which in its totality is the only thing that can be real. In historical life, this chain continues infinitely, and therefore each individual link in it is renewed again and again, as though it were being reborn.
> (Bakhtin 1986: 146)

In these notes made in 1970-71, Bakhtin celebrates the infinite diversity of interpretations and deplores the

way in which

> We have narrowed it terribly by selecting and by modernizing what has been selected. We impoverish the past and do not enrich ourselves. We are suffocating in the captivity of narrow and homogeneous interpretations. (140)

Clark and Holquist, however, are at pains to de-emphasize the parallels between these two philosophies of language.

Holquist in his essay "The Politics of Representation" presents the case that Bakhtin in effect ventriloquizes himself as Volosinov in Marxism and the Philosophy of Language so that he is able to express his essentially religious ideas in the guise of marxist ones in an effort to deceive the Soviet censors. Thus, Holquist sees Bakhtin as knowing more about the ideologies in the gaps of his text than any ideal Machereyan reader could discover. The epistemological grounds for politics as well as for language are clear and reliable, as far as Holquist is concerned. David Carroll rightly takes him to task for this assumption:

> But even if the "real Bakhtin" intended what Holquist claims he intended (and will there ever be enough proof to determine this?), even if Bakhtin wanted his Orthodox beliefs to be the core of his writing, to argue that he conceives of ideology as an external disguise covering over internal messages and truths, that he treats language as inessential flesh surrounding an essential spiritual core, is to purge Bakhtin's theory of language and ideology of its powerful critical dimensions and make it "intend to say" only a part of, or even the opposite of what it says.
>
> Carroll 1983: 73)

Carroll goes on to make an important point which is central to an understanding of Holquist's dilution of Bakhtin's radical ideas:

> In Holquist's interpretation of ventriloquism, the other is simply a way back to the self; all voices are made to serve the authority and intentions of the master author-ventriloquist. If this is dialogism at all - and there are

> moments of Bakhtin's texts that tend to support such a view - it is a very weak form of dialogism, one that is more an appropriation of the other than an opening to or an affirmation of alterity. (74)

In a later essay entitled "The Surd Heard", Holquist shows his concern for a way out of extreme interpretive relativism. He invokes Bakhtin as a "dialogizing other, a meaningful difference for Derrida". (Holquist 1986a: 140) Bakhtin, he points out, refused to recognize

> an absolute difference between inner and outer, self and other. For Derrida, even Freud, the thinker who was most prepared to recognize the alterity of the unconscious within the psyche itself, failed to draw a sufficiently impenetrable barrier between self and other: differance is not present-as-absent, is not, then, present as a Freudian latent in the conscious, nor as a Saussurean signified in the signifier ... It is a version of absolute absence. (147)

Contrasting Bakhtin and Derrida's views of history, what he finds in common between them is

"dialogism's obsession with the phenomenology of authorship" and the attempt of deconstruction "to subvert discourse from within itself". (143) Difference, therefore, as "neither a word nor a concept" becomes "an ideal example of what Bakhtin calls a 'loop-hole' word". (143) The essence of novels, Bakhtin says, is concentrated in a type of double-voiced word, the word with a loop-hole. This type of discourse takes the dialogicality of the novelistic word to its extreme.

> A loophole is the retention for oneself of the possibility for altering the ultimate final meaning of one's own words. If a word retains such a loophole this must inevitably be reflected in its structure. The potential other meaning, that is, the loophole left open, accompanies the word like a shadow. Judged by its meaning alone, the word with a loophole should be an ultimate word and does present itself as such, but in fact it is only the penultimate word and places after itself only a conditional, not a final period.
> (Bakhtin 1984: 233)

This openness is noetheless linked to a will, to a controlling subject, in Bakhtin. And that is not the case in Derrida.

The problems that deconstruction has raised, Holquist implies, can be solved by taking recourse to Bakhtin. He notes:

> Derrida heroically refuses to give a location for difference ... (with) the practical effect of laying him open to charges of locating the mover of his system outside any known system of representation, ... Bakhtin, on the other hand, never hesitates to name extrapersonal social forces as the locus of alterity. (154-55)

Deconstruction's theory of endlessly deferred meanings is thus in an act of partisanship, placed beside dialogism's definition of meaning as interaction with the social world. But the problem with Holquist's prescription, in the "Surd Heard" article which stresses in its entirety the role of history as a means to retrieve the outer world of the writer, is that it fails to specify any historical context. His warning

that - "the level at which Derrida's own analyses of other thinkers finds its characteristic place appears to be too general to contain the historical ... or so closely bound to a given text that it is too specific to be historical" - could indeed be applied to his own position.

The reality or otherwise of Holquist's history is also questioned by Ken Hirschkop, who, in fact, goes to the extent of branding Holquist a formalist. An account of the exchange between Hirschkop and Gary Saul Morson will be useful here. Hirschkop in an article entitled "A Response to the Forum on Mikhail Bakhtin" examined the shared lines of interpretation contained in the articles now collected in Bakhtin: Essays and Dialogues on his Work, edited by Morson. According to Hirschkop, the critics imply that a dialogical model of discourse is relativist - a stance that arises from the use of the concept of dialogism to describe not only a general condition of language but a particular form of valorized discourse as well, the form dialogism takes in the novel. Contesting the blunting of the radical aspects of Bakhtin by attempting to constitute a "properly dialogical discourse", he elaborates:

The form of Gary Saul Morson's article ("Who Speaks for Bakhtin?" pp. 1-19) is the most vivid illustration: dialogism as a friendly and polite discussion in which a difference of opinion is acknowledged as unresolvable but is nonetheless reconciled to the extent that each speaker 'takes into account' the opinions of the other. For Michael Holquist this dialogism which both recognizes and defuses difference can exist because the speaker is confronted by an otherness made less disturbing by the fact that he is 'aware' of it (see "Answering as Authoring: Mikhail Bakhtin's Translinguistics", pp. 59-71). Dialogical communication, almost by definition, becomes a give-and-take in which opposing positions find a common ground. And finally, Caryl Emerson aptly describes Dialogical confrontation as a process of negotiation (see "The Outer Word and Inner Speech: Bakhtin, Vygotsky, and the Internalization of Language", pp. 21-40)... What we find in common here is a definition of Bakhtinian otherness in terms of a fundamental uniqueness of the indivudual that ought to be respected, much as political liberalism in its

> dominant commonsense form emphasizes respect for the individual as a primary value. At the same time, this vision of Dialogism holds out the promise of a coherent and peaceful society in which these individual voices are ultimately reconciled because they "take into account" each other's opinions. This is a far cry from the fierce social struggle outlined by Bakhtin in "Discourse in the Novel", in which the dialogical forces of language actively contest the social and political centralization of their culture. It is likewise remote from the carnival culture described in the study of Francois Rabelais, which takes its internally dialogical form from its function as an oppositional and subversive culture. (Hirschkop 1986: 74)

Questions of cultural hegemony - questions that deal with a profounder understanding of the dialogical, "so that specifically monological cultural forms are understood as <u>forms</u> of the dialogical" - find no place, he argues, in the taming of Bakhtin's radicalism. (75) Linked with this is the implicit revival of the Saussurean dichotomy of <u>langue</u> and <u>parole</u>, in direct contrast to Bakhtin's efforts in transcending the division.

> In Bakhtin's view, the struggle among styles and voices was a "struggle among socio-linguistic points of view, not an intralanguage struggle between individual wills or logical contradictions". But Holquist, Morson, and Emerson attack the 'logical' bias of langue by recourse to the other term of the opposition, language as the struggle of individual wills; the abstract linguistic relationships of are countered by the concrete interpersonal relationships of parole. (78)

In advancing Bakhtin as a theorist of parole, liberal critics reintroduce the opposition between self and society because to enter the social world in their view is to interact with other subjectivities. The social is just a sum of its component subjectivities. Verbal discourse, for Bakhtin, however, is necessarily a social phenomenon -

> social throughout its entire range and in each and every of its factors, from the sound image to the furthest reaches of abstract meaning. (Bakhtin 1981: 259)

Heteroglossia, in other words, is supra-individual.

Responding to the charges levelled against him, Morson in "Dialogue, Monologue, and the Social: A Reply to Ken Hirschkop" suggests that Hirschkop is engaging in polemics and is not mindful enough of the intricacy of his argument:

> We (i.e. Morson and Emerson) describe Bakhtin and Vygotsky as, at their most basic level, maintaining the social as primary in the sense that selves are constituted and composed of "the social". Selfhood, they argued, derives from an internalization of the voices a person has heard, and each of those voices is saturated with social and ideological values. Thought itself is but "inner speech", and inner speech is outer speech that we have learned to "speak" in our heads while retaining the full register of conflicting social values. Emerson quotes, and the interlocutors of my dialogue allude to, Bakhtin's statement that the psyche "enjoys extraterritorial status... (as) a social entity that penetrates inside the organism of the individual person..." (1986: 85)

Morson also stresses that Bakhtin does not reject

altogether the conception of an original self in order to reify the concept of society. And in doing so he points out his and Emerson's disagreement with Holquist:

> Where Holquist sees a "single text", we see a decisive break (i.e. a break in Bakhtin from his neo-Kantian origins); where he sees dialogue as a way of bridging the gap between self and other, the individual and the social, we see it as a way of doing away with that opposition altogether. "Self" and "other", the "individual" and the "social" are made up of the same "substance", namely dialogic words. (86)

Morson clearly aims to surpass, as Bakhtin does, the social/individual polarity. But that aim nevertheless does not prevent him from being trapped in a liberal ideology which places a greater importance on the reality of the individual than on the "construct" of the social world. The social continues to be definable in terms of a conglomerate of individuals. Witness Morson: the social is something that bears "the imprint of each person who uses it, thinks it, speaks it, and changes it by dialogic words". (86)

Dialogism is thus made to fit a world-view that continues to emphasize the primacy of individuals - individuals shaping a non-conflictual society. And that coincides with the political and critical position of a majority of mainstream United States critics. It also suits the design of the liberal critics to underplay, deradicalize, and sometimes neglect outright Bakhtin's mode of the carnivalesque. That the notion of language as "territory shared" can be seen differently takes us to the Marxists.

NOTES

1. By "poststructuralism" I am mainly referring to Jacques Derrida and the Yale critics. There is of course a second form of poststructuralism which takes Michel Foucault's 'power-knowledge' as its master-category. The difference between the two can be highlighted by Foucault's definition of the dispositif, of apparatus constitutive of the social body: "a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions - in short the said and the unsaid". (Foucault 1980: 194) This 'worldly' (as Edward Said puts it) variety of poststructuralism is distinguished by its concern with the discursive as well as the non-discursive. For Derrida and Co there is, however, no possibility of escape from the discursive: "There is nothing outside the text".

2. Defining aesthetics as the study or theory of beauty which has the arts as the primary sphere of study, Clark and Holquist observe: "Such a definition is

relevant to any concept of esthetics, but within the (essentially German) tradition in which Baxtin poses his esthetic, the topic is much broader, because it focuses on the problems that sleep in the Greek root of aesthetics: aisthanesthai, to perceive. (This is also a clue to Holquist's focus on a seeing, sovereign subject.) As in Kant who is a strong dialogic presence in "Avtor i geroj", (an early work of Bakhtin that is rendered as The Architectonics of Responsibility by Holquist) esthetics is treated as a subfunction within the more comprehensive realm and activity of architectonics, the giving of form to a world which without such a gift would be sheer flux and becoming". (Clark and Holquist 1986: 100)

3. Paul De Man attributes Bakhtin's enthusiastic reception by "theoreticians of very diverse persuasion" to the readiness to believe that they have at last found a messiah who transcends intractable theoretical problems. He includes himself among one of his admirers but on his own terms: "What one has to admire Bakhtin for ... is his hope that by starting out, as he does, in a poetics of novelistic

discourse one may gain access to the power of a hermeneutics. The apparent question of the relationship between fact and fiction in the novel hides the more fundamental question of the compatability between a descriptive discourse of poetics and the normative discourse of hermeneutics. Such compatability can only be achieved at the expense of dialogism". (106-7) Thus De Man links Bakhtin with his own project in Allegories of Reading where he sets out to break the kind of rigid opposition that has characterized literary criticism as either formalist or referential. For De Man rhetoric entails both aspects, through the gap between rhetoric as a system of tropes within a text and rhetoric as persuation, which acts outside its boundaries. Reference is a process that no discourse escapes. "All discourse has to be referential but can never signify its referent". (De Man 1979: 160)

MARXIST READINGS/REVISIONS

I am not here repeating the rather well-worn critique of the marginalization of academic Marxism, denouncing the self-perpetuating closure of a high-theoretical, and therefore safe, Marxist discourse, unfolding within a privileged environment, hermetically sealed from the famous "outside world". Such a seemingly radical critique actually prevents posing the most difficult questions. For Marxism would emphatically deny that there could ever be such an absolute separation of the academic from the "outside" world, a separation which implicitly posits this latter "real world" as "society", such that the University itself is again, in a familiar ideological fashion, put <u>outside of society</u>, made "unreal". But I teach in a university whose motto is: In the Nation's Service"; and they mean it. To address the very real problems of the relationship of Marxist activity within the very real ideological apparatuses of this social world, to Marxist activity, or the supposed lack of it, in other social apparatuses (trade unions, mass organizations, etc.) requires specifying the relationship

> among such apparatuses, a relationship which never is, as bourgeois ideology always wants to project it, one of total autonomy. In fact, as a Marxist, I do not believe for a second that there is no Marxism out in that American "real world", nor that it has been totally unaffected by what we do in the academy. The perceived, over-whelmingly "obvious" absence of Marxism in the real world is the effect of an ideological media apparatus, an effect that we err in taking at face value. After all, who would guess, from watching the CBS Evening News, that American universities are crawling with Marxists?
> (Kavanagh 1983: 31)

Notwithstanding the radical enthusiasm in the epigraph, it can be safely said that the almost non-existent political power of a Marxist tradition in the United States is only accentuated by the recent growth of Marxism in the literary-critical domain. Unlike its British counterpart, the -ism has no base in the public sphere and has made few inroads in the social sciences. Cuba, Vietnam, the evolution of the New Left, and the

racial and sexual revolutions in the early sixties, coupled with the activity of entry of student radicals now in their forties, in the professoriat, no doubt provided the impetus for what is called the "rise" of Marxism in the American academy. The recent heightening of interest, particularly among some literary theorists, has been intensified by a reaction against the success of deconstruction. Since around 1980 a historicist reaction against deconstruction has been taking place, epitomized in the publication of Frank Lentricchia's <u>After the New Criticism</u> in that year. Extending deconstruction to social and political contexts, Lentricchia and Edward Said, for instance, have appropriated only those strategies that are most amenable to their interests and have frequently preferred the hypothesis offered by Foucault over those of Derrida. This is particularly visible in Said's analysis of the concept of orientalism in western culture and in Lentricchia's theorizing about the structure of history. Michael Ryan and Gayatri Spivak, although committed to the deconstructionist approach, represent an important expansion of it in seeking in

Marxism answers to questions concerning cultural and literary problems.

In this context, what appeal does Bakhtin have for Marxist literary theory in the United States? The discussion in this chapter will revolve primarily around Frederic Jameson's response to Bakhtin, not only because Jameson is the guru figure of avant-garde Marxist theory in the United States but also because he addresses the major problems (albeit largely indirectly and by gaps and silences in his texts) relating to the appropriation of Bakhtin. The discussion will also center around Robert Young, because his article "Back to Bakhtin" seems to have answered the question posed here by raising further questions of import.

Raymond Williams was probably the first to develop, though not fully, the implications of Volosinov's/Bakhtin's Marxism and the Philosophy of Language. In his Marxism and Literature (1971: 35-42) he recognized not only the potential of Bakhtin's sociological critique of structuralism but the much-required materialist theory of language, so far absent in the field. Williams

is in favour of Bakhtin's notion of the "usable sign" as a product of the "continuing speech activity between real individuals who are in some continuing social relationships". In contrast to Saussure's model of the sign as an abstract element in an 'always given' language system, usable signs are

> living evidence of a continuing social process, into which individuals are born and within which they are shaped, but to which they can also actively contribute in a continuing process. This is at once their socialization and their individuation.
> (Williams 1977: 37)

Williams's dialogic understanding of the dominant/ dominated works to put before concrete social relations over an abstracted hierarchy of hegemony:

> The reality of any hegemony ... is that, while by definition it is always dominant, it is never either total or exclusive. At any time, forms of alternative or directly oppositional politics and culture exist as significant elements in the society. We shall need to

> explore their conditions and their limits, but their active presence is decisive not only because they have to be included in any historical ... analysis, but as forms which have had significant impact on the hegemonic process itself ... any hegemonic process must be especially alert and responsive to the alternatives and oppositions which question and threaten its dominance.
> (Williams 1977: 113)

The dominated political and cultural voices, in other words, establish a dialogic response in the dominant. Echoing Williams, and seeking to detach Marxist criticism from its nexus in bourgeois aesthetics, Tony Bennett declared that "Bakhtin's study of Rabelais would seem fully to exemplify what a Marxist - that is, a historical and materialist approach to the study of literary texts should look like". (1979: 95) The Russian Formalists' intertextual concept of defamiliarization overturned, he believed, "the assumption that the text has a once-and-for-all existence, a once-and-for-all relationship to other texts which is marked and

determined by the circumstances of its origin". (69) But the Saussurean linguistics which the Formalists had adopted was unable to explain literary change in social and political terms. Such an explanation materialized, according to him, in the form of Volosinov/Bakhtin's notion of the "dialogical" in place of langue. Medvedev/Bakhtin in The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship explained the ways in which literature - by presenting language use itself as a locus of class conflict - refracted (as opposed to Lukacsian reflection, one might add) socio-economic reality. Bakhtin in the Rabelais book thus demonstrates how Gargantua and Pantagruel has been appropriated by different critical schools with their own ideological axes to grind. The process of consumption, in fact, is important for Bennett: historical analyses, he emphasizes, must be accompanied by studies of reception.

Exploring interrelationships between text, ideology and history, is also the goal of the post-Althusserian British critic Terry Eagleton. Placing Bakhtin's Rabelais and His World in its historical context, he considers it a classic of Marxist criticism, something to be emulated, in that is constitutes a direct political intervention, produced (although not

allowed publication) during the Stalinist era at a time when Bakhtin ominously disappeared:

> ... it blasts Rabelais's work out of the homogeneous continuum of literary history, creating a lethal constellation between that redeemed Renaissance moment and the trajectory of the Soviet State ... in what is perhaps the boldest, most devious gesture in the history of 'Marxist criticism', Bakhtin pits against that 'official, formalistic and logical authoritarianism', whose unspoken name is Stalinism, the explosive politics of the body, the erotic, the licentious and semiotic.
> (Eagleton 1981: 144)

Yet for Eagleton the concept of carnival is suspect because despite its value, it is an "officially licensed affair". (1986: 129) Therefore,"any politics which predicates itself on the carnivalesque moment alone will be no more than a compliant, containable libertarianism. Bakhtin is too little attentive to the incorporating, politically defusing effects of popular humour ... (Eagleton 1986: 129)

An Althusserian conception of ideology also provides the frame for Frederic Jameson's critical theories. It has been pointed out, and rightly so, that The Prison-House of language: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism (1972) does not even mention Bakhtin. But then before 1972 only Rabelais was available in English translation. The book reviews, only a few in number, did little but provide brief summaries of the contents. And when they went beyond, it was only to make comments like the one in The New York Review of Books to the effect that the Bakhtin method has got it all wrong. Jameson made amends in 1974 in his review article on Marxism and the Philosophy of Language. In praising Bakhtin but damning his critics, he, in fact, isolated what he saw as obstacles that Bakhtin's works faced "in seeking an American Public". "Decades of cold war propaganda have programmed us to believe that Soviet works deal with nothing but their so-called totalitarian system, in a peculiar kind of collective obsession: thus Volosinov's book is only apparently about linguistics; in fact it's really about linguistics under Stanilism, etc." The second obstacle "is the fall-back position in which it

is disqualified on the grounds of its Marxism itself. Here the strategy consists in seeing Marxism as one method among others, and thus a Marxist work on linguistics (!) as a specialized category and indeed a historical curiosity in its own right (to be listed next to Stalin's pamphlet in the bibliography, one would think). Better to study some 'objective' introduction to linguistics, than to be misled by such self-avowed ideological bias". (53 -535) Jameson goes on to admonish the editors for minimizing the Marxist character of the work and stresses that Volosinov/Bakhtin's concept of dialogical speech - a synthesis, he says, of the various trends and problems in contemporary linguistics, particularly what Volosinov/Bakhtin label as the "individualistic subjectivism" of Vossler and the "abstract objectivism" of Saussure - must be understood "programmatically".

This view of Bakhtin is extended in his later work The Political Unconscious (1981), where Jameson defines his 'program' of appropriating Bakhtin among other thinkers. The function of Jameson's doctrine of the political unconscious is to recover the repressed political content of past episodes in the history of

class struggle. In other words, he addresses himself to the problem formulated by Lentricchia: "If we refuse to retreat to a Cartesian conception of an innocent self operating in the halo of natural light, can we construct a theory of reading and textuality that would permit interpretation that can claim to produce not self-expression but knowledge? Can we devise a theory of reading that would respect and seek intertextual determinants and some participation in a history that is not purely the retrospective imposition of ourselves?" (Lentricchia 1980: 188) Marxism, because it denounces specialization, is seen by Jameson as the absolute horizon that contains all interpretive systems. Three social frameworks are visible on that horizon: "the narrowly political" such as Levi-Struss' readings in 'The Structural Study of Myth', where the individual narrative is construed as the production of ideology; the social, where the text is "little more than an individual parole or utterance" (an "ideologeme") (76) within class discourse; and lastly the historical where the text is seen in terms of a battleground of conflicting synchronic modes of production.

Reconstructing the repressed voices in the second framework and delineating the modes of production (in Althusserian terms "the synchronic system of social relations as a whole" (36)) in the third, are the functions that Jameson assigns to criticism. He invokes Bakhtin's idea of dialogism in his program of rewriting "the antagonistic dialogue of class voices". (85) But it is, as LaCapra points out, only to observe that "Bakhtin's use of (dialogism) is 'relatively specialized' to apply to moments of carnival or festival whereas the 'normal form of the dialogical is essentially an antagonistic one'"(84) (laCapra 1983: 258) Canon formation (which is necessarily sans popular culture), for Jameson, thus involves the foregrounding of voices belonging to the hegemonic classes.

Jameson's view of genre is influenced by Bakhtin's. And Bakhtin's theory of genre is quite different from that of the formalists Tynyanov and Tomashevsky. As Clive Thomson puts it: "Whereas the Formalists tended to discuss genre in terms of abstract typology, closure and narrative perspective, Bakhtin emphasizes ideology,

differentiation and polyphony (or multi-voicedness)". (Thomson 1984: 31) In contrast to the generic constants theorized by the Formalists, Bakhtin denies the possibility of replication of the same generic device:

> A literary genre, by its very nature, reflects the most stable, "eternal" tendencies in literature's development. Always preserved in a genre are undying elements of the archaic. True these archaic elements are preserved in it only thanks to their constant renewal, which is to say, their contemporization. A genre is always the same and yet not the same, always old and new simultaneously. Genre is reborn and renewed at every new stage in the development of literature and in every individual work of a given genre.
> (Bakhtin 1984: 106)

Thomson points out that "on a methodological level, Jameson is a highly systematic dialectician, whereas Bakhtin is primarily an analyst and a practitioner of pragmatics. Jameson expands Bakhtin's basic conception of genre as a mediating entity and turns it into 'a methodological construct'. (38) He also rightly goes

on to say that Jameson assimilates the concept of dialogism for the purpose of ideology critique. Dialogism, in fact, drops out of Jameson's principal method:

> the ideological then allows us to reread or rewrite the hegemonic forms in themselves; they also can be grasped as a process of the reappropriation and neutralization, the cooptation and class transformation, the cultural universalization, of forms which originally expressed the situation of "popular", subordinate, or dominated groups ... this operation of rewriting and of the restoration of an essentially ideological or class horizon will not be complete until we specify the "units" of this larger system ... This larger class discourse can be said to be organized around minimal "units" which we will call ideologemes.
> (Jameson 1981: 86-87)

In Thomson's view such an expansion is not a "subversion" or a "deformation" of Bakhtin's ideas. (39) But, of course, it is. Living in a dialogue between different ideas, Bakhtin's concept of dialogism cannot be really

recontained in the totalizing tendencies of a stringent Marxism.

In asserting the primacy of totalization, what Jameson in fact argues is that the poststructural stress on heterogeneity actually "requires the fragments, the incommensurable levels, the heterogeneous impulses, of the text to be once again related, but in the mode of structural differences and determinate contradictions". He later goes on to insist that the novel is not so much "an organic unity as a symbolic act that must reunite or harmonize heterogeneous narrative paradigms which have their own specific and contradictory ideological leanings". (144) But Bakhtin does not argue for unity; rather, he sees the novel as reinforcing heterology in contradistinction to other genres because its narrative cannot be contained centripetally. His conception of language as dialogic underlies the notion of heteroglossia:

> At any given moement in its evolution, language is stratified not only into linguistic dialects in the strict sense of the word ... but also - and for us this is the essential point - into languages that are socio-ideological: language

> of social groups, 'professional' and 'generic' languages of generations and so forth ... Alongside the centripetal forces, the centrifugal forces carry on their uninterrupted work; alongside verbal-ideological centralization and unification, the uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunification go forth. (Bakhtin 1981: 271 - 2)

In his theory of narrative, the novel is the genre that institutionalizes heteroglossia. Thus he argues: "The language of the novel is a system of languages that mutually and ideologically interanimate each other. It is impossible to describe and analyze it as a single unitary language. (1981: 47)

Dominick LaCapra in his critique of Jameson, extends the debate as follows:

> ... whatever its limitations the work of Bakhtin, with its dialogical" and carnivalesque "rewriting" of dialectics, as well as its stress upon the role of carnival-type phenomena over time, was more than a relatively specialized mode of cultural analysis to be contrasted with "normal" forms of class conflict, it was a critical effort to

> elaborate a historically and genealogically informed model that might situate the utopian element in literature and suggest institutions to come effectively to terms with the tendencies Jameson decries - one of the few such efforts that the history of modern thought reveals. (LaCapra 1983: 265-6)

In his essay "Bakhtin, Marxism, and the Carnivalesque" LaCapra locates Bakhtin's importance in his study of the carnivalesque. But he does not see Bakhtin perceiving clearly the extra-literary sources of carnival. (1983: 297-324) LaCapra, by virtue of being an intellectual historian and not a critic, unlike Jameson, does not really engage in revisionary appropriations.

Robert Young, a Derridean and founding editor of Oxford Literary Review, in his article "Back to Bakhtin" takes stock of and questions the easy assimilation of Bakhtin by materialist critics. The thrust of his argument is that the liberal politics of Bakhtin make his ideas unsuitable for incorporation by radicals. Two of Bakhtin's concepts, "dialogism" and the "carnivalesque" are, according to Young, dubious material

for any radical program of historicization. Bakhtin's incompatibility with radical criticism, however, does not discourage the radicals from reading out his liberalism. (That, of course, is in striking contrast to the liberal interpretation, as we saw in the last chapter, of Bakhtin as happy pluralist.) In defense of Derrida, Young also observes that, Bakhtin instead of "offering an alternative to Derrida in the sense of an entirely oppositional position, he (Bakhtin) seems to allow the assimilation of some of the more compelling aspects of his thought while placing them within a more acceptable sociohistorical framework, Derrida himself can then be more or less rejected altogether". (Young 1986: 74)

An important point that Young makes is that the Marxist critics' claims for Bakhtin's overreaching of poststructuralism rely on dialectical instead of dialogical arguments. Thus Jameson

> readjusts Bakhtin's dialogism so that it comes to signify straightforward class antagonism within the overall framework of dialectical materialism ... Bakhtin, on the other hand, makes it clear in those texts signed with his

> own name that dialogism cannot be confused with dialectics.
> (75-76)

Young's suspicion of Bakhtin's popularity is based on the notion that to indulge in Bakhtin is to somehow retreat intellectually, to go back to a position already left behind. He is at one with critics like Lionel Gossman who in fact go back to the days when the cold-war suspicion of Marxist thinking and Russian practice loomed large in the minds of Western conservatives and liberals alike. At the end of a review essay Gossman observes:

> Since, moreover, Bakhtin's work has been notoriously attacked and suppressed by "orthodox" or "official" Marxists, it has the added advantage of being perceived as an alternative to Marxism, one that retains only what is "good" and generous in Marxism based more on sentimental notions of sharing, communication, and breaking down barriers that are hostile to "life" than on any analysis of economic systems.
> Frankly, what disturbs me about the Bakhtin vogue is that it seems to me we may have been here before.
> (Gossman 1986: 349)

The "time" of Bakhtin, however, is problematic. The time of a thinker's physical existence does not necessarily synchronize with the time when, at a certain critical jucture, his/her ideas find a more meaningful resonance. That time for Bakhtin perhaps is now when he can be fruitfully justaposed with Derrida, Barthes, Foucault, Lyotard, and so forth. "The historical life", as Bakhtin himself stressed, "of classic works is in fact the uninterrupted process of their social and ideological re-accentuation". (1981: 421) Re-accentuation is exactly what seems to be happening to his works; and Young, in fact, as Allon White in his "fraternal" reply points out, despite his seeming desire to be only an observer becomes a participant in the process.(White 1987-88)

If Bakhtin is so easily accommodable to non-Marxists, Young's argument runs, then obviously Bakhtin is not really a Marxist: that hard-line Marxists have to rewrite Bakhtin. But a contrary explanation is possible: there is in America, as Ken Hirschkop has pointed out, "an ideological drift, the ultimate effect of which is to evade the most radical aspects of Bakhtin's work". (Hirschkop 1986: 70) In analyzing

how Bakhtin's dialogism is downplayed by economistic/ pragmatic Marxists but seized on by liberal pluralists, Young really comes out on the side of the critics who have de-emphasized and cut off the radical Bakhtin. Apparently concerned for marxism, Young finds Bakhtin not up to it. Young's rigid definition of marxism is the one that belongs to the uncontaminated purist realm of Hegelian dialectics. Bakhtin, by no means, is a strict adherent to that brand; but that does not preclude him from being a marxist in his own right for the simple reason that Marxism is not a static, unstratified school of thought.

Young, interestingly, would like to foreground the Medvedev and Volosinov texts as they are more radical. Clark and Holquist, on the other hand, see the really radical aspect of the work to belong not to Bakhtin but to Volosinov & Co; they would therefore like to foreground the later texts. "The second part", they affirm, "while not free of Marxist declarations, seems more purely Bakhtinian in its stress on context and intonation". (Clark & Holquist 1984: 167) Pick and choose. That seems to be the name of the game.

Above all, it goes against the spirit of what Bakhtin (and/or his circle) meant by dialogism and heteroglossia. "There are not nor can there be any pure texts" (Bakhtin 1986: 105)

Like Eagleton and others, Young too questions the liberatory nature of carnival. There, admittedly, are limitations in Bakhtin's understanding of the carnival, especially his equation of it with a revolutionary politics in the Rabelais book. There is no interrogation in Bakhtin, as Peter Stallybrass and Allon White note in their study,

> concerning the politics of carnival: its nostalgia; its uncritical populism (carnival violently abuses and demonizes weaker, not stronger, social groups - women, ethnic and religious minorities, those who 'don't belong' - in a process of displaced adjection); its failure to do away with the official dominant of culture, its licensed complicity.
> (Stallybrass & White 1986: 19)

The recognition of these limitations leads Young to view carnival the way he does. It is not possible here to summarize the lengthy critique that Stallybrass

and White offer of the view of carnival as a safety valve whereby the official culture, the established order is only reaffirmed. Suffice it to say that

> It actually makes little sense to fight out the issue of whether or not carnivals are intrinsically radical or conservative, for to do so automatically involves the false essentializing of carnivalesque transgression (White 1982: 60). The most that can be said in the abstract is that for long periods carnival may be a stable and cyclical ritual with no noticeable politically transformative effects but that, given the presence of sharpened political antagonism, it may often act as catalyst and site of actual and symbolic struggle". (14)

Another important point the authors make is that "there is no a priori revolutionary vector to carnival and transgression". (16) Both politics and carnival are not in stasis; they are dynamic, shifting notions. Young commits the error of overlooking their diachronically unfolding vectors.

What must be recognized - and it has been recognized to a certain extent - is the immense potential that Bakhtin's idea has in inaugurating a whole area of research for social historians. And of course for literature: especially in opening up a dialogic interaction with Marxist theory.

NARRATIVE DISCOURSE: AUTHOR/HERO/OTHER I

The names of Umberto Eco among semioticians, Gerard Genette and Tzvetan Todorov among structuralists, and Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida among post-structuralists suggest that a sizeable degree of continental thought in philosophy and criticism since 1960 has worked in one way or another to expose and deflate representation. (By "representation" I mean Auerbach's notion of "realism" as he traces its evolution in Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature (1953) and accords it the highest cultural function.) Late twentieth century literary theory in particular has detrivialized the literary to the extent that deconstructive rhetoricians regard all language as evolving through the metaphoric substitution of figurative terms for other equally figurative terms with no final nonfigurative reference point.

An imperfection that stands out of these various metaphors of textuality is the absence of a real-world correlate of the authorial function in literary activity. Intentionalist fallacy (Wimsatt 1946) had

been exposed earlier and the late sixties (Barthes 1968; Foucault 1969) saw the last nails driven into the authorial coffin.

Although Bakhtin comes quite close to the nexus of intertextuality (especially Bakhtin 1978) as we have had occasion to see, his theory of dialogical interrelationship requires that texts be embodied in flesh and blood material points of view:

> In language as the object of linguistics, there are not and cannot be any dialogical relationships: they are impossible both among elements in a system of language (for example, among morphemes, and so forth), and among elements of a "text" when approached in a strictly linguistic way. (...)
> Nor can there be any dialogic relationships among texts when approached in a strictly linguistic way. Any purely linguistic juxtaposition and grouping of given texts must necessarily abstract itself from any dialogic relationships that might be possible among them as whole utterances.
> (Bakhtin 1984: 182)

Todorov also uses the term intertextuality (Todorov 1981: 95) to designate Bakhtin's dialogism in its "most inclusive sense" and keeps the term dialogic for certain specific instances of intertextuality, such as reciprocation of rejoinders between speakers.[1]

Crucial to an understanding of Bakhtin's version of the addressor-addressee or author-character dynamic are the two texts: Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity (English translation 1990) and The Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics. In the course of the exposition it will be my effort to scrutinize Bakhtin's theories concerning the creative act.

In the earlier text (ca. 1920-1923) Bakhtin opens analeptically in dealing with the problem of the relationship of the author to the hero:

> Enough has been said, perhaps, about the fact that every constituent of a work presents itself to us as the author's reaction to it and that this reaction encompasses both an object and the hero's reaction to that object (a reaction to a reaction). In this sense, the author intonates every particular and every trait of his

> hero, every event of his life, every action he performs, all his thoughts and feelings, just as in life, too, we react valuationally to every self-manifestation on the part of those around us. (1990: 4)

Two basic presuppositions are therefore assumed right from the start. First, that a work comes to us only as an author's reactions to the objects and characters in that work; and further the reactions of the characters also come to us only from the position of the author. Secondly, that the above assumption is analogous to our reactions to the others around us who constitute our world.

A work of art is co-created in the sense that a reader's experience is controlled through the spatial, temporal and semantic perspective of the author. Experience of characters from within, from the characters' own foci of vision, is not available to the reader in the aesthetic act. This position of the author outside of the characters he creates and responding to the characters in the very creative act

which authors them, Bakhtin describes by calling it vnenaxodimost, "extralocality" as Todorov translates it, or "exotopy" as Clark, Holquist, and Emerson prefer to render it. A person also, like a character in a book, is not complete within his or her own consciousness, but is only completed from without, from the extralocality and 'transgredience' of **another.**[2]

The authority of the author, however, is far from totalitarian.

> The author is authoritative and indispensable for the reader, whose relationship to the author is not a relationship to him as an individual, as another human being, as a hero, as a determinate entity in being, but rather a relationship to him as a principle that needs to be followed... (1990: 207)

Once the creative act is complete, the flesh and blood author retains no privileged position. In dealing with aesthetic problems, biographical criticism is thus given no importance.

The determination of the hero as a spatial totality, as a temporal totality, and as a semantic whole, make up the three categories in the author's extralocal act of totalization. Examining the author's spatial relationship to the hero, Bakhtin asserts that the self can be perceived and determined only from without, by another; and one's inner perception of oneself is only the cumulative ratio of the perceptions of ourselves which we have seen reflected in others. In a Lacanian or proto-Vygotsian (see Emerson 1986 on how "inner speech" issues from "outer speech") mode, Bakhtin traces the distributive valorization of our externally manifested self.

> The child begins to see himself for the first time as if through his mother's eyes, and begins to speak about himself in his mother's emotional - volitional tones (...) it is his mother's loving embraces that "give form" to him axiologically. (1990: 50)

We as selves - that is, as others - are not created from a single centre of authority. One falls victim

to the "expressivist" fallacy when one ignores the author's role as transgredient other. Similarly one falls into "impressivist" aesthetics when one ignores the hero's role as an autonomous element.[3] The aesthetic event, for Bakhtin, is to be seen as an interrelationship of two consciousnesses in which one gains wholeness through the other's extralocal transgredience.

As the other person is completed from the author-other's surplus of spatial vision, so the inner self is totalized from an extralocal surplus of temporal vision. Actual semantic totality is denied to my perspective: "The whole of my life has no validity within the axiological context of my own lived life". (105) One can never see oneself as a spatial temporal whole; in the very act of attempting to make myself both subject and object one fails to coincide with oneself from within.

Meaning is open in the direction of the future, and it only becomes fixed once it can be located in the past. The author is always positioned vis-a-vis the

hero "always later, and not just temporally later, but later in meaning. (118) It is precisely in attempting to "be for oneself" that one remains "still to come", unclosed, undefined.

> As soon as I attempt to determine myself for myself (and not for and from the other), I find my self only in that world, the world of what is yet to be achieved, outside my own temporal being - already - on - hand; that is I find my self as something-yet-to-be with respect to meaning and value. (123)

One is always still in the making, the meaning is yet to come; but another can be fixed in a semantic whole.

> For me, the other coincides with himself, and through this integrating coincidence that consummates him positively, I enrich the other from outside, and he becomes aesthetically significant - becomes a hero. (129)

Opening his discussion of the semantic totality of the hero with a discussion of acts (or deeds), Bakhtin observes that acts are future-oriented, they

are openended; what defines an act is its "not-yet-being". To be is to be determined and whole, while active consciousness is always still becoming. Thus, for Bakhtin, one can <u>be</u> for another.

Discussing author-hero relationships as they are manifested in the confession, he considers it as an attempt at an axiological relationship toward oneself, but

> Pure, solitary self-accounting is impossible; the nearer a self-accounting comes to this ultimate limit, the clearer becomes the other ultimate limit (126);

the more one tries to coincide with oneself, the more certain one's lack of self-identity.

> In confessional self-accounting, there is no hero and there is no author, for there is no position for actualizing their interrelationship, no position of being axiologically situated outside it. (147)

In such a situation it is the reader who must provide the position of extralocality. The confession provides

raw material for a potential aesthetic event which would have to be found in the reader's valuational and meaning-framing response. The confession then is an open work which can only be closed in a reader's response.

> The contemplator begins to gravitate toward authorship, and the subiectum of self-accounting becomes a hero (of course, the beholder does not co-create here with the author, as he does in the perception of a work of art, but performs a primary act of creation - a primitive one). (148)

The act of confession may be approached cognitively from an aesthetic or theoretical point of view, but these approaches do not in essence carry out its task.

Bakhtin's acute stance on the absolute extra-locality of the authorial point of view begins to weaken a little as he proceeds. What he discerns in the autobiographical act is a kind of posterior position of extralocality vis-a-vis oneself, admittedly finally involving recourse to actual alterity.

The "biographical form" is the most "realistic" form (152), since the extralocality of the author is more or less limited to a partial spatio-temporal exteriority, while the field of meaning remains "life"-like.

The author in the autobiographical relationship is not really the self but rather the introjected other. Recollecting one's past can be seen as a kind of narrative fabulation, in which the transgredient elements come from others.

> Without these stories told by others, my life would not only lack fullness and clarity in its content, but would also remain internally dispersed, divested of any value-related biographical unity. (154)

The author as an element of the work of art never coincides with the hero. They are two, but there is no basic opposition between them. "Their axiological contexts are the same in kind (...) Both of them - hero and author - are others". (164)

The work still remains open at some level, and the reader may have to flesh it out into a finished aesthetic whole. The value of openness, at this point, begins to assert itself and Bakhtin's discussion of autobiography contains much that prefigures his later work on the evolution of novelistic discourse collected together in The Dialogic Imagination.

If in the autobiography the authorial position is weakened by the necessity of constant recourse to extra-authorial extralocal positions, in the lyric there is an inverse situation: the hero loses all "authority" and has only a kind of potential autonomy; the author predominates. The author's semantic surplus overcomes the hero, who can offer no resistance. The hero "does not really live a life of his own, but only reflects himself in the soul of the active author - the other by whom he is possessed. (172)

In terms of extralocality the most paradigmatic example of proper author-hero relations would seem to be found in the creation of a character. Here the hero is an autonomous element while the author for his part makes use of the full range of his extralocal surplus

of vision to complete the hero as a total determined character. The classical dichotomy of Classical and Romantic are seen by Bakhtin as the two main tendencies in characterization. The classical approach sees the character as a whole in terms of his destiny, inscribing the hero within a genealogy and a tradition. Whereas in romanticism the hero takes on more responsibility for his destiny. This aready destabilizes the authorial position; the hero becomes an "infinite" character.

"Type is the passive position of a collective personality". (183) Such a position is an apparent given-ness, the author completes it with a "cognitive surplus", the character of a collectivity stands before the author, transparent to his scrutiny. The position of the type is the most objectified position which the subject of an aesthetic event can occupy. This is the position of the character in a satire. The type presupposes the superiority of the author, even allowing him to uncover the contextual factors determining the hero, whose independence, obviously, is greatly reduced.

The modes of characterization which Bakhtin has investigated are, of course, generalizations, abstractions. In actual terms, aesthetic activity is not static, and includes many different degrees of approximation between author and hero.

> (T)he author and the hero contend with each other; now they approach and join each other, now they absruptly dissociate themselves from each other. But the precondition for the fullest consummation of a work consists in their dissociating themselves decisively from each other and in the author's being victorious. (186-87).

In the last section of the essay, after reasserting the impossibility of true self-reflection, of knowledge of oneself as totality, Bakhtin restates his views on the limitations of formal linguistic analysis and places himself in diametric opposition to the Mallarmean insight that literary works of art are made of words. The verbal material, for Bakhtin, is shaped by the dispositions of the created world.

In summing up, Bakhtin refers again to the reader-author position. The reader does not perceive the author, but <u>through</u> the author. Regarding the author himself would lead to a situation where the reader would set up an extralocal position of his own, performing his own act of transgredient creation. The author's individuation

> as a human being is no longer a primary but a secondary creative act performed by the reader, the critic, the historian, independently of the author as an active principle of seeing - an act in which the author himself is rendered passive. (208)

NOTES

1. It was Julia Kristeva who first saw Bakhtin formulating the concept and coined the term intertextuality for him. (Kristeva 1967). But Ann Shukman, among others, points out that "... Kristeva's epistemological void is alien to Bakhtin's personalism, steeped as it is in Western humanist values". (Shukman 1980: 223) Even if Kristeva's Bakhtin is a bit too materialist, the burden of my thesis has been partly to demonstrate the politics of relegating Bakhtin in the "humanist" tradition.

2. Transgredience, a term Bakhtin borrows from the German aesthetician Jonas Cohn, is used "to denote elements of consciousness which are external to it, but are nevertheless crucial to its completion and totalization". (Todorov 1981: 146)

3. The "expressivist" view (Herman Cohen et al) holds that the works of art express inner states of being and that the aesthetic event involves the experience of those inner states. Bakhtin contends that

> In itself, the moment of co-experiencing (empathizing, "identifying" oneself with the inner life of the other) is, in essence, extra-aesthetic. (1990: 64)

In the "impressivist" view (Bakhtin cites the names of Konrad Fiedler, Adolf von Hildebrand, Eduard Hanślick, Alois Riegl and Stephen Witasek; Kant, says Bakhtin, occupies an ambivalent position.) the hero is ignored and becomes merely a by-product of the material with which the author plays.

NARRATIVE DISCOURSE: AUTHOR/HERO/OTHER II

Bakhtin's early views, as expounded in the last chapter, seem to have been constructed by his biographers from their own historically extralocal vantage point. Specially discordant in reference to Bakhtin's essay is the intimation that the self others itself (Clark and Holquist 1984: 65), emphatically asserted by Holquist to be

> the suggestion of Bakhtin's total oeuvre, conceived as a single utterance.
> (Holquist 1986: 315)

Unlike Todorov (1984a) who is faithfully closer to Bakhtin in his celebration of alterity, Holquist's application of the authorial metaphor comes close to reducing Bakhtin's radical decentering of the location of personality to a cozy "self" - perpetuation. What of course must be borne in mind here are the limitations of Bakhtin's presuppositions when pitted against his better known later work. The authorial position in

this early piece is a rather exploded notion, however provocative his deconstruction of interiority and privileging of alterity may be.

No longer resisting prolepsis, we can now discuss some of the departures in the Dostoevsky book. In "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity" self-consciousness was seen as impossible in that any attempt at self-reflection invariably split the self and foreclosed the possibility of an accurate vision of the self as a finished whole. Now it appears that it is precisely this impracticable self-reflection which is the key to the unity of Dostoevsky's novels. Moreover, Bakhtin's notion of self-consciousness is nevertheless virtually unchanged:

> Dostoevsky's hero is an infinite function... (He) never for an instant coincides with himself. (Bakhtin 1984: 51)

But Bakhtin does not renounce his earlier view of author-hero relations. In Tolstoy, for instance,

> the total finalizing meaning of the life and death of each character is revealed only in the

> author's field of vision, and thanks solely to the advantageous "surplus" which that field enjoys over every character, that is, thanks to that which the character cannot himself see or understand. This is the finalizing, monologic function of the author's "surplus" field of vision. (1984: 70)

It needs to be pointed out here that the two modes of characterization - monologic and dialogic - are not really rival methods of representing the same "reality", but rather two discrete art-forms. One has to do with the representation of concrete existence, the other with the representation of consciousness. They would, however, seem to exclude each other within a single work. A free dialogism of discourse is foreclosed by an authorial extralocal surplus. Bakhtin now seems to acknowledge the darker side of the other:

> In a human being there is always something that only he himself can reveal, a free act of self-consciousness and discourse, something that does not submit to an externalizing definition. (1984: 58)

But can autonomy exist as anything but a response to an other? It is daring of him now to take Notes from Underground as a prime example of the new found autonomy of Dostoevsky's characters, since we may be inclined to agree with the hero's own position, and that of the frame narrator, that his hyperconsciousness is a disease, a paranoia, R. D. Laing's "ontological insecurity": psychic death anxiety, the terror of ceasing to exist in being defined by another consciousness. Essential is the external persistence of alterity:

> To be means to communicate dialogically. When dialogue ends, everything ends.
> (1984: 252)

It is aesthetically irrelevant to argue with the irrationality of such an equation of psychic definition from without with death. Instead of diagnosis what is needed is dialogics. For Bakhtin, as for the existentialists, the "clinical" approach is entirely unsatisfactory. Bakhtin may be seen to have taken the "critical" path as opposed to the "clinical" - the two

readerly response options which Derrida speaks about. (Derrida 1978) Such a choice is symptomatic of a revolution in Bakhtin's own views and indicative of an enhanced appreciation on his part of the self as subject.

EPILOGUE

In the preceding chapters I have, if not very explicitly, then implicitly at least, suggested what I think are some of Bakhtin's most useful potentials. There still remain, however, a few observations I would like to make.

Entering the dialogue begun by Todorov's "A Dialogic Criticism?", Bialostosky recognizes dialogics as an alternative art of discourse on the same level as the arts of dialectic and rhetoric. (Bialostosky 1986) He therefore argues against a reduction of dialogics into the rhetoric or the dialectic. "Dialogics as an art of discursive practice supplements the dialogical principle as a theory of discourse; whereas the the dialogic principle models the possible relations among voices in diverse areas of inquiry, dialogics projects a world of fully articulated relations among voices and a practice of actualizing multiple relations among internally divergent voices in such a world". (Bialostosky 1989: 224) A dialectical transumption

or a rhetorical reduction goes against the grain of Bakhtinian dialogics.

Bakhtinian dialogics does not belong to a fixed system of belief but overreaches the traditional boundaries of the human sciences. "Our study will move in the liminal spheres, that is, on the borders of ... the disciplines, at their junctures and intersections". (Bakhtin 1986: 103) What is needed is a fuller appreciation of the 'whole' of his oeuvre, rather than the expropriation of 'parts', that serve a particular critic's or school's purpose.

In keeping with assertions like those of Said (who also argues for analytic heterogeneity), literary theory should take account of the text's situation in the world.

Textuality must not become dissociated from history:

> As it is practised in the American academy today, literary theory has for the most part isolated textuality from the circumstances, the events, the physical senses that made it possible and

> render it intelligible as the result of human work.
>
> (Said 1984: 4)

Critical noninterference and a narrow definition of the philosophy of textuality can be seen as related to the rise of Reaganism (and Thatcherism in the United Kingdom) and the dominance of right-wing attitudes in the late 1970s and 1980s. What needs to be affirmed is the "connection between texts and the existential actualities of human life, politics, societies, and events". (Said 1984: 5) Bakhtin's so-called textualism or extra-textualism must be brought together with Foucault's preoccupation with the relation between discourse and power. Bakhtin's failure to theorize power relations in depth can be rectified by Foucault's formulations which can, for instance, lead to a better understanding of the positioning of the subject by discourse.

Bakhtin's discursive strategies, I think, ought to be utilized to provide ways of broadening our conventions of reading. His work draws attention, albeit implicitly, to the need to remain aware of the social

relations and institutional factors outside of which no private reading or definition of any text can be understood in its entirety. Bakhtin can be fruitfully read, in other words, to theorize the text's situation in the world so that the primacy which it is conventionally granted is interrogated. This would lead us to a position where decannonization would have to be accepted: high art must learn to coexist shoulder to shoulder, with low or popular art. A large-scale deployment of Bakhtin's arsenal of theory in this direction still awaits its homecoming festival.

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