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Mikhail Bakhtin: *Philosopher of Language*

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This essay offers itself less as an explanation of what Bakhtin means than as a reading—a dialogic, unfinalizable, reactive/proactive/interactive response to the unfolding work of Bakhtin. Indeed, my purpose in writing this essay could never be to “explain” Bakhtin’s theories; such a project is not feasible, given the Bakhtinian positions on discourse and dialogism. For Bakhtin, the act of explaining deadened the relationship between speaker and subject, in contrast to comprehending (or understanding), which maintained between them a living relationship. In “The Problem of the Text,” an essay that is more a collection of Bakhtin’s notebook jottings than finished work and that is included in *Speech Genres*, Bakhtin develops this fundamental distinction:

To see and comprehend the author of a work means to see and comprehend another, alien consciousness and its world, that is, another subject (“Du”). With *explanation* there is only one consciousness, one subject; with *comprehension* there are two consciousnesses and two subjects. There can be no dialogic relationship with an object, and therefore explanation has no dialogic aspects (except formal, rhetorical ones). Understanding is always dialogic to some degree.¹

The problem Bakhtin poses for an author attempting to write a prolegomena to his work is how *not* to explain him while “explaining” him, that is, how to create an understanding that maintains an awareness of the multiplicities of nuance, value, accent, and meaning that exist between “explainer,” “explained,” and “explainee.”

Some additional cautions. Mikhail Bakhtin does not simply believe in heteroglossia, dialogism, carnival, novel, speech genres—his work is

situated within them because they represent vital philosophical, theoretical tenets that, in his view, are constitutive of language. This fact alone sets Bakhtin apart from most theorists, from most writers and critics, who argue (for example) about aesthetics in distinctly non-aesthetic language, language that is devoid of the dialogizing power that characterizes contemporary novelistic language. Bakhtin stands counter to such thinking, so counter that he is at times baffling to read. He has been criticized for his loopy, associative style, his conceptual shiftiness, his tendency to think things through in prose. Ken Hirschkop can be taken as a representative voice among those who find Bakhtin maddening to read:

The debate on Bakhtin is made yet more difficult by the nature of his writing: immensely varied stylistically and topically, but also—and more importantly, I believe—writing which strives for solutions it cannot quite articulate. It moves between alternative and contradictory formulations in a single essay and thus produces a set of concepts whose explanatory importance is matched by an unnerving tendency to slide from one formulation to the next with disturbing ease. Such ambiguities are not the sign of an open and sceptical mind, but neither are they mere inconsistencies which can be safely ignored. These internal contradictions dictate that argument over concepts like “dialogism” and “heteroglossia” cannot be settled by a definitive decision as to what they “really” mean; instead, we must discuss how to manage these complexities and contradictions, and to what ends.²

Hirschkop may be right in much of what he says, but for the wrong reasons. Bakhtin believes that language is alive, that listeners (and readers) must enter into the discourse of others, that words shift in meaning even when merely reiterated, that the process of thinking through metaphysical problems as a writer is privileged over producing a text that clarifies issues for a reader. Bakhtin is a celebrant of traveling, not destination. Moreover Bakhtin holds that all words, texts, discourses, languages are joined together in a “chain of speech communion” (SG 76), linked both to antecedent and anticipatory responses. This simple theory of mutual responsiveness invigorates all his thinking and leads him to collapse distinctions between ordinary and poetic discourses, technical and nontechnical forms of utterance. Clive Thomson explains it this way:

For Bakhtin, meta-language is not an abstract code different in kind from the text that it supposedly accounts for. There is no basic difference between the discourse to be studied and the discourse used to study a discourse. . . . The relationship between meta-language and the language (or texts) that it analyzes is always dialogical.³

The danger of muting the distinction between these discourses is the potential to conflate literature with criticism, a move that is already

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apparent within the academy. Bakhtin's point here is not that criticism is literature but rather that criticism must engage its objects of study dialogically, as part of an ongoing conversation in which all parties maintain roles as speaking subjects.

Bakhtin's resistance toward definition and explanation would be less of a problem did he not simultaneously demonstrate a preference for neologizing. In vain will one search Bakhtin's texts for definitions of "dialogism," "heteroglossia," "polyphony," "novel," "carnival," and the like; neither will the desperate reader find clear-cut definitions in this essay. Nor is this mere perversity. Bakhtin's method of inquiry is circular. He celebrates the loophole, the sideward glance, the various oppositional elements that create resonance in language. Bakhtin delights in flux; one of his favorite participles (in translation at least) is "unfolding," and it is not possible for meanings to unfold once they have been set into the rigid form of a definition, a point Clark and Holquist make clear in *Mikhail Bakhtin*:

Bakhtin was an enemy of anything that had ceased to be in process, which was no longer open to correction, addition, or contribution from the outside. He was ambivalent about the status of writing as opposed to speech, and some of the subtlest of his own applications of his theories open up other written texts to the kind of give and take usually thought to obtain only between two people engaged in conversation.⁴

Instead of definition and explicitness, Bakhtin provides descriptive analyses, examples, a great deal of thinking through what he means when he extols Dostoevsky as polyphonic, or Menippean satire as an early form of carnival. Reading him is in a very real sense like overhearing a conversation; as eavesdropper, one must maintain concentration even as Bakhtin digresses, lowers his voice, loses his place, stares off into space and then reconsiders, rethinks, reformulates.

Because Bakhtin resists definition, categorization, and linear analysis, he hovers outside traditional Western epistemology as defined by the Aristotelian method. Aristotle's analytic methodology was disjunctive; it understood the world as comprising its composite parts. Discourse consists of the deliberate, epideictic, and judicial. Appeals are categorized in terms of ethos, pathos, and logos. Such a scientific mode of inquiry assumes that we understand best by isolating phenomena, the way many linguists understand language by isolating a word from a phrase, a sentence from a discourse, the way cellular biologists understand life by the titration of protein molecules. Bakhtin is opposed to such taxonomizing, opposed to the kind of thinking that characterizes the Western intellectual tradition. For him, the world can only be understood, appreciated, celebrated in terms of relation. To isolate a word, an utterance, a text in Bakhtin's thinking was to destroy its very

meaning and significance, like trying to study a flake of snow by placing it under a heat lamp. The result, for many readers, is a body of theoretical work that feels so folded in upon itself as to resist entry. As Clark and Holquist state, "What is difficult about Bakhtin is the demand that his way of thinking makes on our way of thinking, the demand to change the basic categories that most of us use to organize thought itself" (MB 6). The only solution is to immerse oneself in Bakhtinian texts and suspend that Aristotelian desire for clarification by means of definition and division.

Within the critical tradition, it might be best to label Bakhtin a Socratist (a neologism of my own). Bakhtin read the formalists, the structuralists, the German Romantics, the literary historians. He read and admired neo-Kantians like Hermann Cohen and Ernst Cassirer, the linguist Wilhelm von Humboldt, and many others. But his ideas about the world of the word take on an original and uncategorizable flavor—and they are focused on and focused through a celebration of the orality of discourse. His writing reflects this; Bakhtin's texts are forms of conversation, forms of engaging in dialogue. As he states in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*:

The single adequate form for verbally expressing authentic human life is the *open-ended dialogue*. Life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. He invests his entire self in discourse and this discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium.⁵

This commitment to open-ended dialogue means that Bakhtin is often repetitive (but not redundant) as he rethinks his positions and that his texts require readers to position themselves as active participants engaged in open-ended dialogue.

Mikhail Bakhtin is, I believe, a Romantic theorist in the best sense of the word, a condition that gets him criticized for being soft, fuzzy, idealistic. He sees discourse as a vital force, something in some sense living that possesses energy and even consciousness. For Bakhtin, the word has multiplicities of meanings; it carries a semantic history and, though it exists in the present, it always anticipates the future. The word collapses time/space understandings. It takes on a life of its own, has affect, gives voice. Moreover, unlike most critics, Bakhtin does not seek to provide intellectual machinery whereby the reader can perform an analytic act with more efficiency and precision. On the contrary, Bakhtin slows the act of reading and interpretation, for one voice becomes many voices. In a post-Bakhtinian reading, the word resonates; its edges blur.

That a theorist who celebrates double-voicedness and trespassed borders where one's word becomes another's should himself be subject to considerable confusion about authorship is perhaps inevitable. The perplexing question of authorship may never be answered to everyone's satisfaction; regardless, it needs to be considered from the outset. The name "M. M. Bakhtin" appears on four major texts (translated into English): *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, *Rabelais and His World*, *The Dialogic Imagination*, and *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. These texts are indisputably Bakhtin's, as is another important early essay, "Toward a Philosophy of the Act," which is not yet translated into English. Several other texts, however, show strong Bakhtinian influence but have appeared under the names of other individuals who were associated with Bakhtin, specifically: V. N. Voloshinov (who met Bakhtin in 1918) and P. N. Medvedev (who met Bakhtin in 1920). These three men were friends, fellow intellectuals, and important figures in the intellectual renaissance that appeared in post-Czarist Russia in the 1920s. Voloshinov is the apparent author of several significant texts: "Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art," *Freudianism: A Critical Sketch*, and *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. The Medvedev text under question is *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship*. (For dates and publishers, see Bibliographic Note.) Since the names of Voloshinov and Medvedev appear on these books, one might ask how anyone could claim that Bakhtin authored them.

The answer is complicated and probably never will be answered to everyone's satisfaction. During the past few years, scholarly camps have fortified themselves with various historical evidence—Holquist and Clark maintaining that Bakhtin wrote at least ninety percent of each work and Titunik, Emerson, and Morson arguing that Voloshinov and Medvedev were the primary authors of their own work. Holquist and Clark, for example, maintain that Bakhtin found it politically necessary to publish his work under the names of friends once he fell under the unflinching gaze of the Stalinist police state. They argue that all the works in question were "assembled" from Bakhtin's dense notebooks; that they represent a variety of perspectives on the same issue, namely language as a socially constituted and socially constituting medium (MB 148–50); that Bakhtin is known to have published his own work under the name of his friend Kanaev, thus creating a precedent; that Bakhtin would enjoy the joke, the carnivalistic act, of publishing his own words in someone else's mouth. Titunik, Morson, and Emerson marshal equally persuasive arguments in opposition, stating that Voloshinov was an intellectual heavyweight in his own right and would not allow his professional credibility and personal safety to be undermined in this way; that the Marxist thinking in Voloshinov's and Medvedev's work is different in tone and timbre

from anything Bakhtin wrote under his own name; that in the absence of concrete proof, we must assume that the name on the book cover is indeed the name of the author. Todorov tries to mediate, quoting V. V. Ivanov, who states unequivocally that Bakhtin essentially wrote the books in question, but also noting that Bakhtin never publicly acknowledged authoring these texts. Ultimately Todorov adopts a compromise of sorts:

A conclusion seems unavoidable: it is unacceptable to simply erase Voloshinov's and Medvedev's names, and to thus go against Bakhtin's obvious desire not to assume the *publication* of these writings. But it is equally impossible not to take into account the unity of thought evidenced by the whole set of these works, a unity one could attribute in accordance with the various testimonies, to Bakhtin's influence.⁶

Todorov's solution is to add a slash and the name "Bakhtin" after the names Voloshinov and Medvedev. My own solution in this essay is simply to cite the works as published (although my usage is complicated by the decision of Albert J. Wehrle, translator of *The Formal Method*, to cite "P. N. Medvedev/M. M. Bakhtin" as author), but also freely to interchange one name for another. This policy derives from my belief that the Voloshinov texts in question are substantially influenced/authored by Bakhtin as are significant portions of the Medvedev book. The ideas expressed in the books by Bakhtin are so similar and fit so well with the great proportion of ideas expressed by Voloshinov and Medvedev that it seems unavoidable to conflate them. Moreover, Bakhtinian theory itself argues for a fusion of self and other, multiple transgressions of textual boundaries—or at the very least, a relaxation of attention on whose mouth utters whose word. Bakhtin and Voloshinov (and to a lesser extent Medvedev) authored and, at least in terms of significant influence, coauthored texts; to consider them all under the name of "Bakhtin" may do some harm to literary and textual historical scholarship but ultimately allows us to make greater sense of the works as a whole. As Albert J. Wehrle reminds us, the late 1920s was a time of the collective and "only as a movement (a body of texts unified by approach) could Bakhtin's ideas enter the ideological struggle on an equal footing with other trends."⁷ In this essay I will often follow the lead of Wehrle and Ann Shukman, who characterize the group as the Bakhtin school, Shukman describing the school as "a tightly knit group of friends and intellectual equals who met regularly for intensive philosophical discussions ('strong tea and talk till dawn' as Voloshinov recalled)."⁸ With Bakhtin as the theoretical center, this group of individuals can be considered at the very least as the collective author of texts on language, consciousness, and the notion of authorship.

The Life

It is always tempting with a thinker as original as Bakhtin to search for root causes, psychoanalytic insights that explain his philosophy of language. In the finest biographical treatment to date, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist attempt to do just that, theorizing for example that Bakhtin's close emotional-intellectual relationship with his older brother Nikolai greatly influenced his theory of the dialogic. Rather than offer such psychoanalytic and speculative readings, insightful as they may be, I will instead present a brief and mostly "factual" biographical sketch, drawing largely from Clark and Holquist.

Bakhtin was born November 16, 1895, in Orel, a provincial town south of Moscow, and died on March 7, 1975, in Moscow of complications primarily from emphysema. Bakhtin might well have lived longer had he not been such an inveterate smoker: to work, he always had to have his cigarettes and his strong tea. The following story would be apocryphal were it not true: Bakhtin's manuscript, *The Novel of Education and Its Significance in the History of Realism* was destroyed when Soviet Writer, the publishing house, was blown up during the early months of the German invasion of the Soviet Union. Bakhtin had worked on this manuscript for at least two years; back home in Savelovo, possibly unaware that his manuscript had been destroyed, he used most of the original pages that he retained as cigarette paper. Only a fragment of the manuscript remains. Unlike most authors, it was not the written word that obsessed Bakhtin: it was *writing* the word. Once the work was done, Bakhtin was sufficiently ambitious to want to see it published but cavalier enough about it to sacrifice scholarship for the pleasures of tobacco and the driving necessity to sustain speculation. Toward the very end of his life, when he was being rediscovered by a new generation of Russian intellectuals, it was "only after the most strenuous arguments by Vadim Kozhinov and Sergej Bocharov that Bakhtin could be persuaded first of all to reveal the whereabouts of what unpublished manuscripts he had (in a rat-infested woodshed in Saransk) and then to permit them to be retranscribed for publication."⁹

Son of a bank official and descendant of untitled nobility that traced itself back to the fourteenth century, Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin was one of five children. Other than his emotional and intellectual relationship with Nikolai, his older brother (born 1894), Bakhtin apparently developed only a tenuous relationship at best with his mother, father, and three younger sisters. Holquist and Clark claim that Bakhtin's relationship with Nikolai, who among other activities fought with the White Army, joined the French Foreign Legion, and became a Greek scholar at Birmingham University, "was the great

defining aspect of Bakhtin's childhood and the most formative contact of his life" (MB 17). Certainly the two brothers developed along similar intellectual lines.

Until the age of nine, Bakhtin and his brother were privately educated by a German governess who provided them with extensive readings in European culture, particularly the Greeks and Romans, but "refracted through the medium of German" (MB 21). It is interesting to speculate here that one of the major influences on Bakhtin at this early, formative stage was Hegel, especially since we know that the boys read Hegel early. Whether Bakhtin's theories concerning the dialogic qualities of language owe a debt to Hegel's formulations of dialectic, contradiction, and the theory of the absolute cannot be stated with certainty; Bakhtin himself seldom refers to Hegel as a major source. Hegel's belief in synthesis is substantially different from Bakhtin's belief in dialogism. As Todorov states, "For Voloshinov/Bakhtin there is no third, synthetic term as we find in Hegel, and this fact is revealing; for him, oppositions will always have an unsurmountable character" (MBDP 76). Julia Kristeva, on the other hand, argues for a more substantial influence:

The notion of dialogism, which owed much to Hegel, must not be confused with Hegelian dialectics, based on a triad and thus on struggle and projection (movement of transcendence), which does not transgress the Aristotelian tradition founded on substance and causality. Dialogism replaces these concepts by absorbing them within the concept of relation. It does not strive towards transcendence but rather toward harmony, all the while implying an idea of rupture (of opposition and analogy) as a modality of transformation.¹⁰

From the scant available evidence, it seems likely that Hegel provided a metaphysical model of being in the world which Bakhtin then invested with his own voice and accent.

From the age of nine until fifteen, Bakhtin lived in Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, a vibrant intellectual center which impressed Bakhtin with its magnificent, historic architecture and "colorful mix of languages, classes, and ethnic groups" (MB 22). Clark and Holquist argue that experiences such as living in Vilnius ("the Jerusalem of the North" [MB 22]) and being introduced early to a wide variety of literatures in a number of languages led Bakhtin toward certain of his fundamental attitudes concerning the endless variety of the word; certainly they would contribute to a carnivalized appreciation of life as difference.

Bakhtin attended Russian schools in Vilnius, but he and his brother additionally hired a private tutor to teach them Greek. In 1910, at the age of fifteen, Bakhtin moved to Odessa, where he finished gymnasium.

He entered Odessa University in 1913 but moved to Petrograd University at the beginning of his sophomore year, in part to join his brother. Clearly even in these early years, Bakhtin was fully engaged in an intellectual life: he read and argued about (with his brother and others) the French and Russian symbolists, German philosophy, Russian literature, the Greeks and Romans, futurist and Formalist thought, Kierkegaard, Buber. He was an active participant in the Petersburg Religious-Philosophic Society. Indeed, Clark and Holquist argue that Bakhtin was deeply committed to a philosophic version of Russian Orthodox theology that celebrated community "where each individual personality would flourish, there would be no absolute authorities, and yet all would have a sense of common bond—something like the Bakhtinian polyphony or heteroglossia translated into social terms" (MB 129). Of course this was also a time of extraordinary social and political upheaval: World War I was decimating Europe and the Russian Revolution broke the hold of the czarists just as Bakhtin was finishing his stay at the University. In 1918, in the midst of social upheaval, Bakhtin moved to the relative calm and safety of Nevel, where the well-known Bakhtin Circle first formed.

Like Bakhtin, all members of the Nevel Circle (or Bakhtin Circle as it later came to be called) were committed to fiercely debating a broad range of issues and ideas from art, music, and ideology to the history and future of Russia. They saw themselves as founding a school of philosophy, and their mission included education through public lectures and public service. The members included Valentin Nikolaevich Voloshinov, whose interests spanned philosophy and music; the charismatic Lev Vasilievich Pumpiansky, who became a professor in the Philological Faculty at Leningrad University; Maria Veniaminovna Yudina, who became one of the Soviet Union's most famous concert pianists; Matvei Isaevich Kagan, who possessed wide-ranging interests including mathematics, philosophy, the natural sciences, and economics; and later Pavel Nikolaevich Medvedev, a rising star in the Communist Party whose major commitment was to art and culture. By 1920, Bakhtin followed Pumpiansky to Vitebsk, a larger town, where the Bakhtin Circle reestablished itself. Within this community, Bakhtin and his colleagues engaged in concentrated and sustained discussions. Undoubtedly these dialogic exchanges led to a kind of intellectual collaboration that makes it all the harder to establish a conventional notion of single authorship, something Bakhtin himself did not strictly believe in. It is also clear that in terms of intellectual contributions and overall direction, Bakhtin emerged as the central figure within the circle; moreover, he engaged in public activities that typified his entire life: talks, lectures, weekly meetings focusing on books and ideas. During these years—indeed through much of his life—Bakhtin led a

scholarly life with little official recognition and reward. He read, wrote, actively debated with friends and colleagues, and struggled to consolidate his ideas. In these early years in the 1920s, two other major events occurred: he met Elena Aleksandrovna Okolovich, his landlady's daughter, whom he married in 1921; and in 1923, he began to suffer acutely from osteomyelitis, a disease that would afflict him all his life and eventually would lead to the amputation of his right leg. Bakhtin's marriage to Elena was the great, sustaining relationship of his life. Elena's devotion to Bakhtin enabled him to continue his scholarly work under the most daunting domestic circumstances of poverty and privation.

In 1924, Bakhtin moved to Leningrad, preceded by most of his friends. During these years Voloshinov published "Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art" (1926), *Freudianism* (1927), and *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1929), all of which have been attributed wholly or in part to Bakhtin. Medvedev published several articles as well as *The Formal Method in Literary Study* (1928; revised 1934), a book also attributed wholly or in part to Bakhtin. In the 1920s, Bakhtin himself first began to author important work on literature and aesthetics, although little of it now remains. A pattern was already being established: Bakhtin would write an essay and have it accepted only to see the academic journal disappear or his manuscript be destroyed or political censors halt publication. One success he did achieve was the publication in 1929 of *Problems of Dostoevsky's Creative Works*, a work attributed indisputably to Bakhtin. Unfortunately, the Soviet Union turned sharply to the Right during the 1920s; as rigidity set in, Bakhtin fell victim to the Stalinist purges of intellectuals (as did most of his friends). In 1929, at a time when his career should have been assured, he was accused of crimes such as having his name on a list of anticommunists published in Paris as well as "corrupting the young" (MB 142). Ultimately, through the intercession of friends, he was given a moderate sentence: six years of exile in Kustanai, Kazakhstan, where the average winter temperature was -64 degrees Fahrenheit.

For the next thirty-nine years, Bakhtin lived essentially a life of exile, moving from Kustanai to Saransk to Savelovo and back to Saransk. It is also fair to say, however, that he not only survived but in an intellectual sense at least, flourished. His wife saw to his physical needs, preparing simple meals, brewing tea, buying his tobacco, doing his typing. The two of them lived the kind of plain life that destroyed many of Bakhtin's fellow exiles but suited his own needs for privacy, solitude, reflection. In addition, Bakhtin's "ability to survive was due in part to his equanimity, his sense of humor, and his capacity for accepting gracefully any interlocutor" (MB 254). During this time Bakhtin authored major works: "Discourse in the Novel" (1934–35),

"Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel" (1937–38), *The Novel of Education and Its Significance in the History of Realism* (1936–38), *Rabelais and His World* (1940; pub. 1965), "The Problem of Speech Genres" (1953–54), and a revised edition of the Dostoevsky book entitled *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1963), as well as other essays and prefaces.

This is not to say that Bakhtin isolated himself from the major events between 1930 and 1969. Although initially banned from teaching the young in Kustanai, Bakhtin was asked to teach bookkeeping to farmers and worked as a bookkeeper himself. His wife also worked as salesperson, bookkeeper, cashier. He moved fairly often, endured the Stalinist purges in the 1930s, and lost his right leg to osteomyelitis in February 1938. At one point during this time he would have starved without gifts of food from friends.

Between 1938 and Russia's entry into World War II in 1941, Bakhtin engaged in an intellectual life more fully, lecturing on the novel and beginning an association with the Gorky Institute of World Literature. Indeed, had the war not occurred, Bakhtin might have achieved considerable eminence earlier: in 1940 his manuscript on the novel of education was to be published and he was completing his doctoral dissertation on Rabelais for the Gorky Institute. The war interrupted such activities but governmental need allowed Bakhtin to work professionally. He taught German and Russian in local schools in Savelovo, which improved his economic situation but left him little time for his own scholarship. In 1945, the war over, Bakhtin returned to the Pedagogical Institute in Saransk, where he had taught briefly before the war, and assumed the position of chair of the Department of General Literature and subsequently Chairman of the Department of Russian and Foreign Literature in the Pedagogical Institute's successor, Ogarev University of Mordovia, in 1958. He remained in Saransk until 1961, apparently devoting himself primarily to his brilliant teaching and administrative work. Life in Saransk was difficult. As Clark and Holquist describe it:

The town had an acute shortage of accommodations, and the only place that could be found to house Bakhtin was a disused jail. Even this jail was in such a bad state of repair that it was considered unfit for use, but Bakhtin, who had a soft spot for rogues, not only moved in but made friends with a thief who lived in the basement. (MB 322)

It seems altogether appropriate that the professor who celebrated carnival, himself a political "criminal," would live unofficially behind bars.

In 1947, Bakhtin attempted a defense of his dissertation on Rabelais, but the political climate in postwar Russia again shifted dramatically to

the Right. There was a great deal of nervous temporizing among the faculty at the Gorky Institute who were under attack by government authorities for liberalist tendencies; ultimately, Bakhtin was denied a doctor's degree but granted a candidate's degree in June, 1952—twelve years after completing the dissertation. It was another thirteen years before that great work would be published in Moscow; three years later, in 1968, it was published in English.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Bakhtin's work began entering into intellectual circulation. Victor Shklovsky and particularly Roman Jakobson drew increasing attention to Bakhtin's contributions. But it was the young literary scholars in the Soviet Union, particularly Vadim Kozhinov, who revived interest in Bakhtin and saw to it that the Dostoevsky book was republished. Bakhtin began to receive recognition among western intellectuals in the late 1960s, particularly as a result of the pioneering work of Julia Kristeva and Tzvetan Todorov. Unfortunately, by this point the health of both Bakhtin and his wife was precarious at best and did not allow them to travel or enjoy the pleasures of success. Bakhtin's left leg could no longer bear his weight, and his wife was barely able to walk. Largely through the intercession of the new generation of Soviet intellectuals, Bakhtin and his wife were moved to a hospital and then an apartment in Moscow in 1969. He gave his last public lecture at the age of 75 in 1960, at the old people's home at which he and Elena lived. A year later, in December 1971, his beloved Elena died. For Bakhtin, who was as devoted to her as she to him, it marked the beginning of the end. Although he lived four more years and was increasingly lionized at home and abroad by a wide range of literary theorists, Bakhtin lost much of his zest for life. Although he continued to write brilliantly, his final work is fragmentary. He died early in the morning on March 7. The attending night nurse heard his final words: "I go to thee." To whom the "thee" refers is unclear, but it is not surprising that even in his last words Bakhtin expressed a desire to forge a relationship between self and other.

Toward a Philosophy of Language

In their introduction to *Rethinking Bakhtin*, Gary Morson and Caryl Emerson attempt to make some posthumous sense of Bakhtin's unfolding intellectual history: they see his work "as a complex, and often haphazard, development that may be divided into four periods."¹¹ These periods are pre-1924, 1924–1930, 1930–early 1950s, and early 1950s–1975. The earliest period "consisted of largely philosophical writing about ethics and aesthetics . . . language was *not* a central category of his thought" (RB 5). During 1924–30, Bakhtin formulated

his concept of dialogism and the polyphonic nature of language, arguing for his ideas most fully in the Dostoevsky volume. During the 1930s and 1940s, Bakhtin came to see Dostoevsky as part of a long European tradition that he defined as "the novel." He offered an original concept of this genre and developed his ideas, as well, on chronotope, carnival, Rabelais—all of which could be categorized under the heading of "novel." The Bakhtin that we know is largely this Bakhtin, since *Rabelais and His World* and the essays in *The Dialogic Imagination* were composed in those years. During the last period, Bakhtin "returned to the philosophical concerns of the first period, now enriched by his long sojourn through literary history" (RB 5). He revised the Dostoevsky book (available in the excellent Emerson translation), developed ideas on "the nature of the humanities and the kinds of dialogic or creative understanding appropriate to those disciplines" (RB 6) as well as producing fragmentary "essays" that reveal the complexity and richness of his thought. A good bit of this work is available in *The Problem of Speech Genres*.

As even so brief an intellectual history suggests, Bakhtin's concern with language develops from a concern with philosophy, religion, epistemology. Bakhtin wants to know in part who we are, and since his answer is that we can only be known through our language—since we create our language, which, in turn, creates us—Bakhtin necessarily becomes a philosopher of language, a literary critic, a rhetorophilologist in the sophistic tradition. He is, of course, in his thinking a radical revisionist who it might be said devoted himself to a lifelong critique of rationalist approaches to language and text. Our rationalist inheritance from Aristotle through Descartes and beyond leads ineluctably to Saussure who offers a division of language into *langue* (essentialist, formal, abstract analyses of discourse) and *parole* (speech, verbal interplay, the idiomatic and familiar). Subsequent linguists have modified Saussure's insights but not challenged his basic conceptual model of language. According to this kind of linguistic analysis, language must be studied scientifically in an attempt to discover its deep structures, its absolutist principles. Formalist thinking in Russia, as characterized by Eichenbaum, Shlovskii, and others, adopted a similarly scientific approach in its consideration of aesthetic texts, adhering to a form/content oppositional paradigm, attempting an understanding of a literary work by isolating various elements within it, "subtracting various essential aspects from the word and other elements of the artistic work."¹² The works by Voloshinov, Medvedev, and Bakhtin argued against the essentialist epistemology of Saussure, the Formalists, and others who presumed an underlying homogeneity and stability in the objects/texts they scrutinized. Voloshinov's *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, for example, takes Saussure to task explicitly in arguing

that language must be analyzed as a fluid medium that is sociologically charged; Voloshinov held that "what is important for the speaker about a linguistic form is not that it is a stable and always self-equivalent signal, but that it is an always changeable and adaptable sign."¹³ In a similar vein, Medvedev/Bakhtin's *Formal Method in Literary Scholarship* stated that meaning was historically embedded, that Formalist assumptions about literature are reductive because they "reduce both contemplative and creative perception to acts of juxtaposition, comparison, difference, and contrast, i.e., to purely logical acts" (FMLS 170). In "The Problem of Speech Genres," Bakhtin set out to discuss a hitherto ignored aspect of language, "speech genres," which he describes in terms of their "thematic content, style, and compositional structure" (SG 60) but concerning which he wants to claim an essentially social nature: "Utterances and their types, that is, speech genres, are the drive belts from the history of society to the history of language" (SG 65). The Bakhtin school thus presents a sustained, counterpositivist, post-Formalist critique of language and text. Indeed, it might be fairest to place Bakhtin as a post-Formalist, someone who absorbed the teachings of the Formalist school and in response conceived a sociological poetics of language.¹⁴

Ultimately much of the work of Bakhtin (and Voloshinov and Medvedev) can be said to fall within a discipline that has come to be called "translinguistics" or "metalinguistics." As a translinguist, Bakhtin argues for a view of language in which grammar, lexicon, syntax, morphology, and phonetics, are all "dynamic elements in constant dialogue with other features that come into play only in particular acts of communication."¹⁵ In discussing Bakhtin's revisionist theory of language, it is I think most useful to start with Voloshinov's "Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art," which offers many fundamental translinguistic principles in an abbreviated fashion. Those principles are more fully articulated in Voloshinov's brilliant polemic, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, and then applied as a psychoanalytic critique in *Freudianism: A Critical Sketch*. Finally, Bakhtin's "The Problem of Speech Genres" renews the assault on conventional linguistic theory, and, like *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, offers important insights and arguments on the nature of language in society.

Although language is for Bakhtin the sine qua non of humanity, it poses nearly insurmountable problems in terms of analysis because of its embeddedness in human culture. In "Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art," Voloshinov contrasts the study of language to the study of scientific subjects by drawing an important distinction between scientific and sociological methodologies. His purpose here ultimately is to argue that no appropriate sociological approach to poetics has yet been offered. As Voloshinov states:

Physical and chemical bodies or substances exist outside human society as well as within it, but all products of ideological creativity arise in and for human society. Social definitions are not applicable from outside, as is the case with bodies and substances in nature — *ideological formations are intrinsically, immanently sociological*. . . . The most subtle formal nuances of a law or of a political system are all equally amenable to the sociological method and only to it. But exactly the same thing is true for other ideological forms. They are all *sociological through and through*, even though their structure, mutable and complex as it is, lends itself to exact analysis only with enormous difficulty.

Art, too, is just as immanently social; the extraartistic social milieu, affecting art from outside, finds direct, intrinsic response within it. This is not a case of one foreign element affecting another, but of one social formation affecting another social formation. The *aesthetic*, just as the juridical or the cognitive, is *only a variety of the social*. Theory of art, consequently, can only be a sociology of art. No "immanent" tasks are left in its province.¹⁶

Bakhtin here is not arguing for a psychoanalytic approach to literature; on the contrary he is opposed to such a position just as he is opposed to the "fetishization" of the artistic work ("Discourse" 96–97), that is, to a New Critical methodology. In its place, Bakhtin wants to contextualize art within social, dialogic, interactive frameworks "which take us beyond the border of the verbal altogether" ("Discourse" 107). The claim being made here is an important one that will hold great significance for Bakhtin's work; as Todorov explains it:

Linguistic matter constitutes only a part of the utterance; there exists another part that is nonverbal, which corresponds to the context of the enunciation. The existence of such a context has not been unknown before Bakhtin, but it had always been looked upon as external to the utterance, whereas Bakhtin asserts that it is an integral part of it. (MBDP 41)

For Bakhtin, social elements — the setting, the identities of the speakers, their relation, their gestures, the ideological content and value of the hero, tone, movements — all enter into the semantic content: "*the situation enters into the utterance as an essential constitutive part of the structure of its import*" ("Discourse" 100). Poetic utterance differs in degree, not in kind, for it too must be understood as "*a powerful condenser of unarticulated social evaluations* — each word is saturated with them. *It is these social evaluations that organize form as their direct expression*" ("Discourse" 107). Thus does Voloshinov return us once again to the essential role of the social in all utterance.

Voloshinov's example of a simple speech act illustrates many of these principles. He posits two people sitting in a room. One of them says, "Well." The other remains silent. In terms of conventional linguistic

analysis, this utterance possesses no semantic content because traditional linguistics fails to take into account the "extraverbal context" ("Discourse" 99): a day in May, snow falling, the two speakers looking out the window, a shared weariness of the Russian winter. Suddenly, the "well" possesses meaning; the word takes on semantic value because of the extraverbal context, indeed the word is empty except for the context which fills it with meaning. The importance of context is so significant that, in Bakhtinian terms, the word — any word — is non-repeatable; each time a word is uttered its meaning changes because the context in which that word is uttered or written changes. Its quicksilver nature makes the word impossible to study in any formalized way; it can only be glimpsed, seen out of the side of the eye, induced. Yet for all its elusiveness, indeed because of it, the word holds the key to understanding consciousness and sociological reality. What makes the word even harder to analyze (at least the printed word) is that much of its meaning and value depends on intonation as well as gesture and an implicit, shared understanding. These factors make it impossible to study the word, as it were, within the objectified environs of a dictionary or on the structuralist dissecting table of a traditional philologist.

Voloshinov then asks an important question: to whom is the "well" directed? Certainly not toward the other speaker, who need not interact in any way whatsoever. Rather, the "well" is directed toward a third participant whom Voloshinov calls "the hero":

Who is this third participant? Who is the recipient of the reproach? The snow? Nature? Fate, perhaps?

Of course in our simplified example of a behavioral utterance the third participant — the "hero" of this verbal production — has not yet assumed full and definitive shape; the intonation has demarcated a definite place for the hero but his semantic equivalent has not been supplied and he remains nameless. ("Discourse" 103)

If we grant Voloshinov his position, we must agree with his inevitable conclusion, a conclusion that is one of the bedrock principles of Bakhtinian theory:

any locution actually said aloud or written down for intelligible communication (i.e., anything but words merely reposing in a dictionary) is the expression and product of the social interaction of three participants: the speaker (author), the listener (reader) and the topic (the who or what) of speech (the hero). ("Discourse" 105)

Voloshinov's formulation grants equivalent (although not inevitably equivalent) status to speaker, listener, and hero; each is conceived as a kind of speaking subject, not as a passive object or mere recipient. Heroes enter into discourse, into utterances and texts and novels and

essays, just as do listeners and speakers. All verbal discourse, whether in life or in art (for the difference is one of degree not of kind), is a "scenario of an event" ("Discourse" 107); it is engaged with speakers, heroes, and listeners and participates within a living context in which meaning is a function of relation. "Verbal discourse is the skeleton that takes on living flesh only in the process of creative perception—consequently, only in the process of living social communication" ("Discourse" 107).

In *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, Voloshinov infuses semiotic analysis with a social-historical consciousness. Through a fairly linear argument, he makes a number of important claims beginning with the basic statement that "Everything ideological possesses meaning . . . In other words, it is a sign" (MPL 9). Furthermore, every sign possesses a kind of double consciousness since it both is "part of a reality" and "reflects and refracts another reality" (MPL 10). Consciousness itself is constituted by these signs, a process that is essentially, inevitably social in nature. Because signs "can arise only on interindividual territory" (12), they are inherently social; thus "The individual consciousness is a social-ideological fact" (MPL 12). As is clear, the word and the self are inextricably bound into one another, a claim that leads Voloshinov ultimately to author *Freudianism: A Critical Sketch* (about which more later) and, in *Marxism*, to claim that "it is not experience that organizes expression, but the other way around—expression organizes experience. Expression is what first gives experience its form and specificity of direction" (MPL 85). For Bakhtin, this is a totemic statement; it represents the fundamental importance of language to humanity—and also justifies the recursive self-reflexivity that is necessary to study a phenomenon that privileges consciousness itself.

Throughout *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, Bakhtin (Voloshinov) develops this sociological theory of the word. He argues that the "word is a two-sided act . . . As word, it is precisely the product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addresser and addressee" (MPL 86). Speakers and listeners anticipate meanings and responses, create contexts, forge a kind of semantically intuitive bond. Thus,

Any true understanding is dialogic in nature. Understanding is to utterance as one line of a dialogue is to the next. . . . Therefore, there is no reason for saying that meaning belongs to a word as such. In essence, meaning belongs to a word in its position between speakers; that is, meaning is realized only in the process of active, responsive understanding. (MPL 102)

Because the word is social, it possesses both meaning and value. After all, "Every utterance is above all an evaluative orientation" (MPL 105),

and part of the responsibility all of us have as speakers and listeners is to develop an acuity to read value in language. In part what we must "listen" for is social value converted into morphological text, that is, the kinds of gesturing, intonation, and contextualizations that are forged within the word when it is placed onto the page. Such thinking leads Voloshinov to offer a catalog of different speech types in the third part of *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, which he entitles "Toward a History of Forms of Utterance in Language Constructions" (MPL 107–59). He is particularly interested in the relations among speaker, listener, and subject (or in Bakhtinian terms "hero") as they get played out in various kinds of direct and indirect forms of speech. After all, I can speak (write) directly about my brother, I can create a narrative structure within which my brother can be given dialogue (quoted speech), I can indirectly quote my brother's speech (indirect discourse)—or, in the most dialogized form, my speech and my brother's can merge and fuse. In this latter instance, which Bakhtin labels "quasi-direct speech" but which is known more commonly as "free indirect discourse," "authorial intonations freely stream into the reported speech" (MPL 146). The hero speaks, in a sense, with two mouths—his own and the author's, somewhat the way that Bakhtin himself is "speaking" in this essay outside the quotations marks, his voice refracted through my editorial reconceptualizations.¹⁷ By the end of his analysis, Voloshinov essentially claims that virtually all language study must center on quasi-direct speech:

The categorical word, the word "from one's own mouth," the declaratory word remains alive only in scientific writings. In all other fields of verbal-ideological creativity, what predominates is not the "outright" but the "contrived" word. All verbal activity in these cases amounts to piecing together "other persons' words" and "words seemingly from other persons." (MPL 159)

Indeed, the Bakhtinian view is that all language exists on the border between self and other, that I receive language from others and must find a way to invest these words with my own meanings, values, accents. The world is filled with a multiplicity of languages, dialects, intonations; we live in an environment charged with semantic alterity. R. B. Kershner puts it this way:

For Bakhtin, both written and spoken language and inner monologue are made up of a great variety of conflicting variants—"languages" of officialdom, vernaculars, occupational jargons, technical, literary, and subliterate languages, all polyphonically resounding. Language variants often are undetectable simply through diction and semantics, but rely upon intonation and upon context; thus Bakhtin in his attack on formalism stresses the need for a "translinguistics" to represent the

reality of communication through utterance. The condition of our existence is thus heteroglossia, a conflicting multiplicity of languages; dialogism is the necessary mode of knowledge in such a world, a form of relationship between or among different languages that, like dialectics, defines a sort of logic. Because for Bakhtin consciousness is always language, and thus unavoidably ideological, the linked processes of perception and interaction with the human world are always dialogical.¹⁸

This drama of multiple speakers, multiple meanings and languages, plays itself out continuously as long as the world is voiced.

In *Freudianism*, Voloshinov develops a sociological, Marxist critique of Freudianism based on his theories of language. Freud's conceptions of self and psyche were grounded in two biological constants: sex and age. Voloshinov contrastingly advocates a Marxist psychology that argues "first, that a Marxist psychology must deal with the cultural and historical specificity of human consciousness; and, second, that a Marxist psychology must be grounded in objective methods."¹⁹ Since Voloshinov holds that there is no self without language, it follows necessarily that consciousness rests upon a semiotic foundation. Indeed, the subconscious does not differ from the conscious in kind but in degree: "Freud's unconscious can be called the 'unofficial conscious' in distinction from the ordinary 'official conscious'" (FR 85), a formulation that may say as much about repression of speech in Soviet Russia as it does about psychoanalytic theory.

As in *Marxism*, Voloshinov here is articulating a social theory of personality. After all, the methodology that Freud employs in psychoanalysis is the interview, the dialogue, the dream narration, the confession—linguistic forms all. Words, social experience, class awareness are the essential constituents of consciousness and the subconscious. As Caryl Emerson states in her excellent comparison of Bakhtin and Vygotsky:

The assumption that the psyche is, at its base, a "social entity," a space to be filled with ideological signs, sets the Bakhtinian concept of consciousness at odds with much of Western thinking since Freud on the subject. In his remarkable descriptions of the transitions from "social intercourse" to "outer speech," and from "outer speech" to "inner speech" and to consciousness, Bakhtin fundamentally rethinks both the relation of consciousness to the world around it and the relation of the self to others.²⁰

Although no explicit mention is made of Vygotsky's work by Bakhtin (or vice versa), it is clear that both were thinking along similar lines. Vygotsky argues for a view of language development from a socio-ideological perspective; Voloshinov's *Freudianism* rests on a trans-

linguistic foundation in order to critique a Freudian theory of mind that denied the self a social reality grounded in the word.

In "The Problem of Speech Genres," Bakhtin further articulates his theory of translanguistics by developing a theory of utterance that emphasizes the speaker/listener dimension of language. He distinguishes an utterance from a sentence, a word spoken in the world from a word printed in a dictionary. In each of the latter instances, language is defined only in terms of its formal properties. A sentence, for example, "is grammatical in nature. It has grammatical boundaries and grammatical completedness and unity" (SG 74), qualities it possesses by virtue of its static nature. An utterance, contrastingly, is defined in terms of communication: its boundaries "are determined by a *change of speaking subjects*, that is, a change of speakers" (SG 71). Through this definition, Bakhtin grounds language in a humanly populated world. In part, he offers an abstract description of the various kinds of utterances that are developed within typical situations, producing a somewhat unsatisfactory typological analysis. What is much more fruitful are the insights he offers about language as utterance, particularly his analyses of the speaker/listener dimension of utterance. He is keenly interested in the ways that various utterances are created in a world shot through with the speech of others. Since all of us live in a world of prior, current, and anticipated speech, our own utterances are created in relation to our understandings of the speech of others: "The expression of an utterance always *responds* to a greater or lesser degree, that is, it expresses the speaker's attitude toward others' utterances and not just his attitude toward the object of his utterance" (SG 92). After all,

any speaker is himself a respondent to a greater or lesser degree. He is not, after all, the first speaker, the one who disturbs the eternal silence of the universe. And he presupposes not only the existence of the language system he is using, but also the existence of preceding utterances—his own and others'—with which his given utterance enters into one kind of relation or another (builds on them, polemicizes with them, or simply presumes that they are already known to the listener). Any utterance is a link in a very complexly organized chain of other utterances. (SG 69)

Utterance can never exist in a social vacuum: "addressivity, the quality of turning to someone, is a constitutive feature of the utterance; without it the utterance does not and cannot exist" (SG 99). For Bakhtin, this concept of responsiveness is an essential one; it grounds utterance in the social. As Bakhtin argues:

The fact is that when the listener perceives and understands the meaning (the language meaning) of speech, he simultaneously takes an active, responsive attitude toward it. He either agrees or disagrees

with it (completely or partially), augments it, applies it, prepares for its execution, and so on. . . . Any understanding of live speech, a live utterance, is inherently responsive, although the degree of this activity varies extremely. Any understanding is imbued with response and necessarily elicits it in one form or another: the listener becomes the speaker. (SG 68)

Bakhtin is arguing here for a kind of speaker/listener identification; indeed, speakers (writers) and listeners (readers) must forge such a sympathetic identity in order to create utterance. And the utterance itself embodies this relation—that is the speaker/listener relation is constitutive of the utterance itself. Seen in this way, the word is always invested with other voices; it inevitably takes into account what has been, is, and will (possibly) be said. Because it is produced by a speaker in a world filled with other subjects and listeners, because it anticipates a listener who is also another speaker, because it is formed within a genre (or speech plan) that frames it constitutively, utterance is a dialogized category of language that cannot be understood in traditional linguistic terms. As Holquist states:

Bakhtin is remarkable for the comprehensiveness of his vision of dialogue and the central role he assigns utterance in shaping the world. His insistence on authorship as the distinctive feature of consciousness is a particularly powerful way of giving meaning to the definition of man that says he is a sign.²¹

Given its atemporal, transpersonal nature, utterance thus becomes a synecdochic aspect of humanity's transcendent nature.

Dialogism and Novel

Another way of coming to terms with Bakhtin's theories is to approach them through his lifelong concern with self/other relations. In their critical biography, Clark and Holquist offer a theory of Bakhtin's intellectual development that explains his work as an attempt to "write the same book, to which Bakhtin never assigned a title but which is here called *The Architectonics of Answerability*" (MB 63). Although this theory has been variously received by other Bakhtinians, it offers a useful focus for Bakhtin's thinking about the relationship between self and other, self and world.²² Clark and Holquist argue:

The Architectonics looms large in Bakhtin's later work because of its emphasis on action, movement, energy, and performance. Life as event presumes selves that are performers. To be successful, the relation between me and the other must be shaped into a coherent performance, and thus the architectonic activity of authorship, which is the building of a text, parallels the activity of human existence, which is the building of a self. (MB 64)

The self is "never whole, since it can exist only dialogically. It is not a substance or essence in its own right but exists only in a tensile relationship with all that is other and, most important, with other selves" (MB 65). Far from constituting a threat, this philosophy of alterity celebrates otherness, for the more there is of the other, the more there is of the self:

Dialogism . . . is a merry science, a *froliche Wissenschaft* of the other. As the world needs my alterity to give it meaning, I need the authority of others to define, or author, my self. The other is in the deepest sense my friend, because it is only from the other that I can get my self. (MB 65)

According to Clark and Holquist, Bakhtin sketches out a fairly elaborate theory of the architectonics of answerability, focusing in part on the deed, that is, on the necessity of the self authoring an action, an event, in order to create a relationship between itself and the other. He attempts to mediate between the Kantian categories of mind and world (MB 77), in part by revising the conventional understanding of time/space dimensions. Bakhtin speculates "that self and other are characterized by a different space and a different time" (MB 79), that the self is always in flux while the other (at least from the perspective of the self) is always fixed and completed; eventually, Bakhtin's ideas on the temporal/spatial dimensions of literature lead to his essay on the chronotope in *The Dialogic Imagination*. At this early stage of his thinking, however, Bakhtin attempts less to articulate a critical understanding of language than to sketch out a self/other theory of the world that can be seen as essentially philosophic and religious—a kind of theoretical moral theology.

For Bakhtin, authorship becomes a model of human action. Just as we author words and essays, so do we author ourselves—and simultaneously are authored by others—within the social world of family, school, nation, and world—and are authored by the forms of discourse themselves. A text is therefore a kind of "self" created through an orchestration of reciprocal relations among various voices. Just as an utterance can be characterized in terms of its responsiveness and addressivity, its anticipation of prior and subsequent responses, so can the word, the novel, the essay be similarly characterized. For Bakhtin, this is ultimately not so much an anthropologic, paleontologic, or narrowly historic truth as it is a religious conviction, an essential value of what it means to be human within a culture, within a social context. According to Michael Holquist, Bakhtin participates in the "kenotic" tradition, a form of Russian Orthodoxy whose basic thesis was

that men define their unique place in existence through the responsibility they enact, the care they exhibit in their deeds for others and the world. Deed is understood as meaning *word* as well as physical

act: the deed is how meaning comes into the world, how brute facticity is given significance and form, how the Word becomes flesh.²³

However much Bakhtin immersed himself in mystical Christianity, his theories of language are suffused with notions of immanence and secular sacredness: he argues for a kind of semantic radiance which suffuses the word.

This concept allows Bakhtin to think of texts as alive in some sense, as participating in a continuous dialogue with writer and world, as possessing a speaker-hero-listener dimension that is as complex and vital as in any rhetorical situation involving human speakers. Novels, stories, the word itself become anthropomorphized, and this view of the word as "alive" in a variety of senses is formative to the very notion of the dialogic, that embracive principle that occupied so much of Bakhtin's thinking. By dialogism, Bakhtin intends two somewhat distinguishable qualities that characterize language.²⁴ In a general sense, all language is dialogic because it is born of an interaction between speaker and listener, each of whom creates words from necessarily different ideological positions:

The dialogic orientation of discourse is a phenomenon that is, of course, property of *any* discourse. It is the natural orientation of any living discourse. On all its various routes toward the object, in all its directions, the word encounters an alien word and cannot help encountering it in a living, tension-filled interaction.²⁵

For Bakhtin, all discourse is characterized by an unceasing struggle to achieve meaning with words themselves being both agent and agency. This struggle is a kind of "war" with neither violence nor victory, only endless attempts to share and merge boundaries without giving up one's own small bit of property. Words, after all, come to us from outside—from parents, siblings, books, media, culture. Words come to us filled with the meanings, intentions, accents and values of other people, other contexts, other historical eras: "The word is born in a dialogue as a living rejoinder within it" (DI 279). We absorb this language and introject it with our own intentions, although the words can never be fully ours. Indeed, were they to become altogether ours, they would cease to have any living meaning. Part of the paradoxical beauty of Bakhtin's theory of the dialogic is that the more there is of the other, the more there is of the self. Self in language can only be realized in this dialogic exchange between itself and the other. Thus that which is foreign, alien, different, is never threatening and must be neither suppressed nor oppressed: in its very oppositeness, it forms a dialogic relation which brings to life both self and other. According to Bakhtin, dialogism "penetrates from within the very way in which the word conceives its object and its means for expressing itself, refor-

mulating the semantics and syntactical structure of discourse" (DI 284):

There are no "neutral" words and forms—words and forms that can belong to "no one"; language has been completely taken over, shot through with intentions and accents. For any individual consciousness living in it, language is not an abstract system of normative forms but rather a concrete heteroglot conception of the world. . . . [language] lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. (DI 293)

The dialogized word is always aware of the word of the other. It lives on the border between various speakers, various communities of language.

Bakhtin's second sense of the dialogic is a more particularized version of this first one. For Bakhtin, some spoken and written utterances exploit the dialogic potential more fully. When Bakhtin states that "*the polyphonic novel is dialogic through and through*" (PDP 40), he means it in this second sense, that is, that the language of the polyphonic novel derives from a position of unfinalizability, of openness and interaction. Bakhtin most fully develops this second sense of the dialogic in his literary analyses. In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, for example, Bakhtin articulates (in a pseudo-Aristotelian manner) categories of dialogized, metalinguistic usages, including various forms of parody, irony, and double-voiced discourse. He uses descriptions such as "internally polemical discourse—the word with a sideward glance at someone else's hostile word" (PDP 196) and "hidden dialogicity" (PDP 197), a discourse by one speaker who incorporates within his or her own text the influences and accents of the interlocutor. Dialogized speech in its very formation conceives of the hero and the listener as speaking subjects, as interactive interlocutors. This formulation allows Bakhtin to claim that in Dostoevsky:

Dialogue . . . is not the threshold to action, it is the action itself. . . . in dialogue a person not only shows himself outwardly, but he becomes for the first time that which he is—and, we repeat, not only for others but for himself as well. To be means to communicate dialogically. When dialogue ends, everything ends. (PDP 252)

Such a statement might well be taken as a credo for Bakhtin's entire body of work.

The engagement of a reader with a text, the engagement of a speaker with a hero and a listener, the engagement of a teacher with a student, an essay with the essayistic tradition, a novel with a novel, an

author with a multitude of speaking subjects, an utterance with the diachronic and synchronic world of utterance—these are necessarily dialogic activities. The word “engagement” is an apt one for this relationship is one of betrothal, of negotiated terms, of uneasiness. When the engagement ends, either in the likely totalizing condition of marriage or the equally totalizing condition of solitariness, we may say that the relationship is now best characterized as monologic. Thus it is not the fact of having a dual or multiple relationship that characterizes the dialogic; it is the nature of that relationship:

The idea *lives* not in one person's *isolated* individual consciousness—if it remains there only, it degenerates and dies. The idea begins to live, that is, to take shape, to develop, to find and renew its verbal expression, to give birth to new ideas, only when it enters into genuine dialogic relationships with other ideas, with the ideas of *others*. Human thought becomes genuine thought, that is, an idea, only under conditions of living contact with another and alien thought, a thought embodied in someone else's voice, that is, in someone else's consciousness expressed in discourse. At that point of contact between voice-consciousnesses the idea is born and lives. (PDP 88)

What makes this relation difficult is that it is an immanent one: qualitative, invisible, felt. Dialogism is the means by which culture lives and renews itself through language.

The dialogical as a concept is perhaps most fully addressed in two books, *The Dialogic Imagination* and *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, though the books are complementary rather than repetitive. *The Dialogic Imagination* opens with two shorter essays, “Epic and Novel” and “From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse,” which describe two polar tendencies that conform to his understanding of monologic and dialogic. His terms for these oppositional genres are epic and novel. Epic, Bakhtin believes, possesses a tendency toward monologizing language. That is, according to Bakhtin, central to the notion of epic form is a unitary understanding of the word. Epic forms (drama, poetry, essay, etc.) evolve out of “absolute” understandings of meaning, intention, national history. Epic is a genre that celebrates the past, the completely finished. Epic discourse posits formalized relations between and among characters, author, reader. It is centripetal, hierarchical: it assumes a certain order of meaning, reifies “truth,” dissolves mutually conflictual and contrastive voices and points of view. Although Bakhtin clearly prefers the dialogic, there are forms of speech and writing which brilliantly realize the monologic potential in language.

Novel, on the other hand, is the most dialogized of genres. It is less a form than a dialogic quality that inheres in texts as varied as a Menippean satire, a Socratic dialogue, or *Crime and Punishment*.

Novel destabilizes author/character relations, celebrates multiple ideologies, lives on the borders of various languages. It is reflective of the centrifugal forces in the language, the forces that stand for “decentralization and disunification” (DI 272). Novel is not categorizable; one of its essential features is its unfinalizability, the ways in which open, free-ranging dialogue penetrates its very words and structures. Bakhtin informs us that “the novel is not merely one genre among other genres. Among genres long since completed and in part already dead, the novel is the only developing genre. . . . Compared with them, the novel appears to be a creature from an alien species. It gets on poorly with other genres. It fights for its own hegemony in literature; wherever it triumphs, the other older genres go into decline” (DI 4). The novel displaces other genres: it incorporates them parodically. It refuses to acknowledge its own borders, thus spilling over into alien territories and claiming those inhabitants as its own. The novel denies itself, disclaims its own constitutive status as novel. The novel is carnivalesque (a not-unacknowledged close-cognate of cannibalistic); it defies the conventional, violates the seemly traditions of community while simultaneously celebrating communal rites of identification.

In “Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel,” the third essay in the volume, Bakhtin attempts a post-Kantian collapse of time and space into a concept he calls “the chronotope.” Bakhtin's interest here is in depicting narrative time, in distinguishing the different kinds of time/space categories present in novelistic texts. He reveals his substantial understanding of folkloric literature as well as classical and medieval texts. Much of his analysis focuses on Rabelais in whose work one finds a culmination of certain tendencies: “a transformation of the rogue, the clown or the fool” (DI 165), “extraordinary *spatial and temporal expanses*” (DI 167), an immersion in the grotesque and carnivalesque. Bakhtin will further develop his celebration of Rabelais in *Rabelais and his World*; in “Forms of Time,” his agenda is a different one, namely to provide a metaphysical rationale for a category of narrative that is itself generative:

They [chronotopes] are the organizing centers for the fundamental narrative events of the novel. The chronotope is the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied. It can be said without qualifications that to them belongs the meaning that shapes narrative. (DI 250)

It is precisely this metalinguistic quality that makes the chronotope so opaque a subject, even to Bakhtin.

“Discourse in the Novel” is probably best paired with *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, since both texts argue for a reconceptualization of our understanding of novelistic texts. In “Discourse in the Novel,”

Bakhtin formulates his understanding of the dialogic and argues for an understanding of style and poetic language (indeed, virtually all language) as "stratified and heteroglot in its aspect as an expressive system" (DI 288). Although Bakhtin primarily concentrates his analysis on what we would call "fictions," his definition of "novel" is open and allusive: "The novel can be defined as a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of language) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized" (DI 262). The novel, therefore, embraces texts as diverse as plays, poems, essays—as long as they possess an artistic aspect that develops meaning dialogically. "Novelistic" in this usage becomes a descriptive term denoting texts saturated with ideological content, filled with voices, engaged with other speakers, heroes, and listeners as speaking subjects. Novelistic texts are double-voiced; every idea, every word in a novelistic text is contested and shares boundaries with other words, other genres, other ideologies. Part of the difficulty of coming to terms with Bakhtin's thinking here, as usual, is his refusal to think in accepted categories; he signals this originality from the opening paragraph of "Discourse in the Novel" when he announces that "form and content in discourse are one, once we understand that verbal discourse is a social phenomenon" (DI 259).²⁶ Bakhtin resists cutting off one aspect of a text from the other; texts can only be seen when viewed holistically, as utterances in which all linguistic aspects come into play at once. "Discourse in the Novel" is one of Bakhtin's most difficult essays, in part because it covers so much ground (the novel, epic, dialogism, style, historical development of the genre, forms of the dialogic in speech), and in part because it reads more like "inner speech" than "finished essay."

For Bakhtin, novel is the dialogic made textual; nowhere is this more true than in the works of Dostoevsky. Bakhtin's revised and enlarged *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* celebrates the polyphonic (a near-synonym of "dialogic") qualities of Dostoevsky. Moreover, by anchoring his observations within a consideration of Dostoevsky's novelistic genius, many of Bakhtin's arguments become clearer. Bakhtin sees Dostoevsky as the quintessential contemporary exemplar of the novelist, someone who was able "to visualize and portray personality as another, as someone else's personality, without making it lyrical or merging it with his own voice" (PDP 13). Dostoevsky's characters, ideas, language—the very ideological fabric of his novels—remain open and unfinalized: the "essence of polyphony lies precisely in the fact that the voices remain independent and, as such, are combined in a unity of a higher order than in homophony" (PDP 21). Each thought of a Dostoevsky hero "lives a tense life on the borders of someone else's thought, someone else's consciousness" (PDP 32). Dostoevsky's

novels are less conventional plots than dramas of voice and idea, explorations of consciousness seen from multiple perspectives.

Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics considers many major Bakhtinian subjects: evolution of dialogic forms, carnival, Menippean satire, Socratic dialogue, stylistics. Perhaps more than any other single work by Bakhtin, it offers both specificity and broad, speculative sweep in its analysis of the word as dialogic. Part of Bakhtin's genius in this volume is to describe aspects of Dostoevsky's dialogism that transcend language. Two examples should suffice. First, Bakhtin explores the recursivity of Dostoevsky's worldview, the ways in which words double back on themselves in the novels. Bakhtin's term for this is "the loophole," which is "the retention for oneself of the possibility for altering the ultimate, final meaning of one's own words" (PDP 233). The loophole is not a word but a position of open-endedness, a banishment of monologized thinking from one's own discourse: "The loophole makes the hero ambiguous and elusive even for himself" (PDP 234). One can see in this device of the loophole a strategy near and dear to Bakhtin himself. Second, Bakhtin offers a characteristic feature of Dostoevsky's novelistic vision: "Dostoevsky always represents a person *on the threshold* of a final decision, at a moment of *crisis*, at an unfinalizable—and *unpredetermined*—turning point for his soul" (PDP 61). There are many literal and symbolic threshold situations in Bakhtin: heroes webbed within conflicting ideologies, heroes literally standing within doorways or between rooms or on various borders. For Bakhtin, these thresholds situate the Dostoevsky world in that shifting world between self and other. The concepts of the loophole and the threshold represent only a small and barely representative fraction of the insights Bakhtin offers in his study of Dostoevsky.

This discussion of the threshold does introduce one other central concept that Bakhtin identifies within the novelistic tradition: carnival. In Rabelais, Bakhtin finds perhaps the greatest modernistic expression of the carnivalesque, though one can see it as well in Dickens, Dostoevsky, Faulkner, and Conrad. In the history of folk culture which culminates in Rabelais, Bakhtin discovers a wealth of structures and activities that vitalize literature and society: carnival celebrations, the feast, the spectacle, the grotesque, parodistic forms of laughter and language, oaths, insults and abusive usages that overturn traditional forms of speaking and yet depend upon them. Carnival taps into a powerful force in human life. Bakhtin names this the world's "gay matter" and it "is born, dies and gives birth, is devoured and devours; this is the world which continually grows and multiples, becomes ever greater and better, ever more abundant. Gay matter is ambivalent, it is the grave and the generating womb, the receding past and the advancing

future, the becoming."²⁷ Carnival as a public form is being smothered by the conventional constraints of an increasingly middle-class and technological society, but it is still observable in various underclass customs (i.e., "the dozens"), mardi gras, folk tradition, and novel.

Bakhtin's celebration of carnival issues from his interest in folk culture and in history of laughter, both of which undermine and disestablish hegemonic forces. In a sense, carnival can be read as the voice of the other in culture:

The opposing voice—really a sort of super-voice, in that it is linked with folk-consciousness and is capable of overturning any other language—is carnival. As a "theater without footlights" in which all are participants, the carnival festival undermines the concept of authoritative utterance, and through its characteristic rituals of mockery, crowning and decrowning of fools, billingsgate, nonsense, and the degrading of everything held noble or holy, carnival presents a "contradictory and double-faced fullness of life."²⁸

The Rabelaisian worldview inverts the world; it denies the vertical ascent of humanity and instead celebrates the horizontal, the corporeal, the digestive, the excretory. It is distortive of life and of language, it laughs at all seriousness, if offers the grotesque as the normative. The language and worldview of Rabelais is situated on the threshold—that borderline between classical and vernacular Latin, official and folk culture. Ultimately Bakhtin's argument serves as a corrective to the increasing sterility and homogeneity of contemporary culture. Rabelais is difficult for us to appreciate because we have strayed so far from our folk roots and abandoned that world of laughter and the grotesque in our desire to inhabit the bureaucratized neighborhoods and cities sanctioned by the official.

In many ways, it is fitting to end on this theme. Bakhtin grants that Rabelais is a difficult author for contemporary readers, that he is "the least popular, the least understood and appreciated" (RHW 1). For much of his life, so was this state of affairs also true for Bakhtin. Living in almost complete obscurity, his work all but forgotten, his words uttered in a terrible kind of isolation, Bakhtin must have imagined himself to be a kind of Rabelais gone wrong, a dialogist trapped in a monologic world. It is heartening to remember that he was, at the very end, lionized at home and abroad; more importantly, it is increasingly rewarding to "live into" his ideas and insights and find in them a continuing source of speculative insight. What Bakhtin says about Dostoevsky's novels might just as well be applied to his own works of theory and criticism: "Nothing 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" (PDP 166; italics in original).

Bibliographical Note

In spite of disputes over authorship I still recommend that new readers to Bakhtin begin with "Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art" (available in *Freudianism: A Critical Sketch*) and *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* by V. N. Voloshinov. "Discourse" maps out some of the essential features of dialogism, and *Marxism* analyzes current linguistic thinking and finds it wanting, proposing in its stead a more Bakhtinian view of language that emphasizes multivoiced discourse and genuinely dialogical qualities that inhere within linguistic structures. In essence, Voloshinov argues for a reconception of the rhetorical paradigm and a revisionary science of linguistics that would embrace aesthetics and speech-act theory. Although much more Marxist in its thinking than work explicitly authored by Bakhtin, Voloshinov's conceptions of language are, I believe, more readily understandable, in part because they come close to existing within a systematic framework. With the now added caution that both texts must be considered "Bakhtin Circle" productions rather than by Bakhtin himself, I still recommend them as a useful departure point for the inevitable long journey through dialogism.

For those wishing to move directly into Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* is perhaps the most central and approachable work. In part this is the result of its publishing history, for the book stands with one foot in the 1920s and the other in the 1960s. Bakhtin's original (1929) text was *Problemy tvorcestva Dostoevskogo* (in English, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Creative Work*). It has not been translated into English. At the request of Kozhinov and others, Bakhtin revised and expanded this study, publishing it in 1963 under the title *Problemy poetiki Dostoevskogo* (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*), which was first translated into English in 1973 by R. W. Rotsel (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1973) and now is available in a magnificent translation by Caryl Emerson. Emerson's Editor's Preface (xxix–xliii) offers a sensitive, cogent appreciation of Bakhtin's thinking and composing process. Indeed, Emerson is one of the finest and most articulate Bakhtinian critics now writing. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* is extremely useful as a starting point because it functions as a double-sided mirror, reflecting Bakhtin's thinking from both his second and fourth phases; major new material that Bakhtin added in the later edition includes "the history of menippean satire, its relation to other forms of literature, and its connection with such extraliterary phenomena as carnival and other discrowning rituals" (MB 240). A similar perspective is offered by *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*; this volume contains essays spanning almost forty years that were first put together in a Russian volume entitled *Estetika slovesnogo tvorchestva* (*Aesthetics of Verbal*

Creativity) published in Moscow in 1979, edited by Sergey Averintsev and Sergey Bocharov. It includes a fragment from the now-lost *The Novel of Education and Its Significance in the History of Realism* on the bildungsroman, the important essay on "The Problem of Speech Genres," and two of his latest and most fragmentary manuscripts: "From Notes Made in 1970-71" and "Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences." The latter two are all the richer for being so elliptical.

Rabelais and His World represents Bakhtin's fullest exploration of carnival and folk culture from the Greeks and Romans through the twentieth century. It includes chapters on the history of laughter, the language of the marketplace (oaths, blazons, insults, etc.), feasts and festival images, and grotesque images of the body. Finally, there is *The Dialogic Imagination*, the most theoretically complex volume of Bakhtin's work in English. This primarily includes essays on the novel written and published by Bakhtin during the 1930s and early 1940s and includes "Discourse and the Novel" as well as "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel." Bakhtin's theories of dialogism and heteroglossia are most fully developed in these essays.

A number of texts published under the names of V. N. Voloshinov and P. N. Medvedev are also worth reading because they develop various aspects of Bakhtin's theories. Of particular interest are Voloshinov's *Freudianism: A Marxist Critique*, appended to which is the important essay "Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art" as well as two other essays: Voloshinov's "A Critique of Marxist Apologies of Freudianism" and Neal Bruss's "V. N. Voloshinov and the Basic Assumptions of Freudianism and Structuralism." Another version of "Discourse in Life" (translated by John Richmond under the title "Discourse in Life and Discourse in Poetry: Questions of Sociological Poetics") can be found in Ann Shukman's edition of *Bakhtin School Papers*. Included in this small volume are additional essays by Voloshinov and Medvedev. Also worth reading is P. N. Medvedev and M. M. Bakhtin, *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship*. This book was published in 1928, with a subsequent revised edition (entitled *Formalism and the Formalists*) appearing in 1934. *The Formal Method* develops a critique of formalism and maps out the limitations a formalist methodology imposes on critics: though it is unclear how much Bakhtin contributed to the book, it does offer an account of genre (Chapter 7, "The Elements of the Artistic Construction") that parallels his account in *Speech Genres*. For a fuller analysis of the debate concerning the Voloshinov-Medvedev-Bakhtin disputed texts, see Chapter 6 in *Mikhail Bakhtin* by Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, and Gary Morson and Caryl Emerson's Part Two of the Introduction to *Rethinking Bakhtin*. I. R. Titunik's essay in the "Forum" (cited below) is also essential.

One of the most useful secondary works is Clark and Holquist's biography, *Mikhail Bakhtin*. The book alternates chapters on Bakhtin's life with chapters exploring his theoretical positions. It also contains an excellent bibliography of primary texts. Holquist's entry on Bakhtin in the *Handbook of Russian Literature* (New Haven: Yale Univ., 1985) is short but informative. Gary Saul Morson edited *Bakhtin: Essays and Dialogues on His Works*: it includes a number of important essays that engage in an invigorating Bakhtinian polemic, including Wayne Booth's praise for Bakhtin's liberatory criticism. Perhaps a more rigorous debate can be found in a "Forum" that appeared in *Slavic and East European Journal*, 30 (Spring 1986); contributors particularly debated the "disputed texts" of Medvedev and Voloshinov. My own essay "Mikhail Bakhtin as Rhetorical Theorist" (*College English*, 47 [October 1985], 594-607) may provide some initial help, particularly for those interested in Bakhtin's implications for composition specialists. The Morson-Emerson introduction to *Rethinking Bakhtin* is splendid, especially in summarizing Bakhtin's fragmentary early essay "Toward a Philosophy of the Act" and exploring certain other essential concepts such as "live entering." The essays in *Rethinking Bakhtin* are exclusively literary in focus; contributors include among others Morson, Emerson, Shukman, and De Man.

Zvetan Todorov's *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle* works hard to make sense of Bakhtin. The book is extremely useful and offers a fine bibliography of primary works by the Bakhtin school, but I think Todorov's structuralist approach deadens the dialogic. I respond similarly to Wayne Booth's affirmations of Bakhtin, even though I appreciate his feminist critique of Bakhtin's *Rabelais* book in "Freedom of Interpretation" (see Morson, *Bakhtin* 145-76). Much better is Julia Kristeva's "Word, Dialogue and Novel," which was first published in 1969 (though written in 1966); it is an excellent reading of the concepts of dialogism and carnival from someone moving to poststructuralist thinking. A provocative postmodernist perspective of Bakhtin can be found in Brian McHale's *Postmodernist Fiction* (London: Methuen, 1987), 162-75. Don Bialostosky is a thorough and provocative reader of Bakhtin; see in particular "Dialogics as an Art of Discourse in Literary Criticism," *PMLA* 101 (1986), 788-79. My own debt to Don Bialostosky in first introducing me to the work of Bakhtin and Voloshinov is one I must acknowledge.

The PMLA bibliography lists over three hundred essays and books that analyze or apply Bakhtinian principles. Scholars interested in engaging dialogically with Bakhtin would be best advised, I believe, to read Bakhtin's work firsthand with occasional sideward glances at the bibliographical items I have listed and to which I have made reference in this essay. Although not available yet, Saul Morson and Caryl

Emerson have coauthored two books that should also prove worthy of attention: *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics and Heteroglossary: Terms and Concepts of the Bakhtin Group*, both forthcoming from Stanford University Press.

In Conclusion?

There is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context (it extends into the boundless past and the boundless future). Even *past* meanings, that is, those born in the dialogue of past centuries, can never be stable (finalized, ended once and for all)—they will always change (be renewed) in the process of subsequent, future development of the dialogue. At any moment in the development of the dialogue there are immense, boundless masses of forgotten contextual meanings, but at certain moments of the dialogue's subsequent development along the way they are recalled and invigorated in renewed form (in a new context). Nothing is absolutely dead: every meaning will have its homecoming festival. The problem of *great time*. (SG 170)

The last word can never be Bakhtin's, nor can it be the last word.²⁹

Notes

1. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. Vern W. McGee, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: Univ. of Texas, 1986), p. 111. Hereafter SG.
2. Ken Hirschkop, "A Response to the Forum on Mikhail," *Bakhtin: Essays and Dialogues on his Work*, ed. Gary Saul Morson (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1988), p. 74.
3. Clive Thomson, "Bakhtin's 'Theory' of Genre," *Studies in Twentieth Century Literature*, 9 (1984), p. 32.
4. Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ., 1984), p. 152. Hereafter MB.
5. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota, 1984), p. 293. Hereafter PDP.
6. Tzvetan Todorov, *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle*, trans. Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota, 1984), p. 11.
7. Albert J. Wehrle, Introduction to *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ., 1978), p. xiv.
8. Ann Shukman, Introduction to *Bakhtin School Papers*, ed. Ann Shukman (Old School House, Somerton, Oxford: RPT Publications, 1983), p. 1.

9. Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson, Introduction to *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: Univ. of Texas, 1981), p. xxv.
10. Julia Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue and Novel," *Desire in Language*, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez, ed. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia Univ., 1980), pp. 88–89.
11. Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, Introduction to *Rethinking Bakhtin: Extensions and Challenges*, ed. Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson (Evanston: Northwestern Univ., 1989), p. 5. Hereafter RB. See also Clark and Holquist's alternative interpretation of Bakhtin's career (MB 3).
12. P. N. Medvedev/M. M. Bakhtin, *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics*, trans. Albert J. Wehrle (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ., 1978), p. 61. Hereafter FMLS.
13. V. N. Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, trans. Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik (Cambridge: Harvard Univ., 1973, 1986), p. 68. Italics Voloshinov's. Hereafter MPL.
14. See Todorov, who states that Bakhtin is postformalist in that "he exceeds Formalism, but only after having absorbed its teachings," p. 40.
15. Michael Holquist, "Answering as Authoring: Mikhail Bakhtin's Trans-Linguistics," in *Bakhtin: Essays and Dialogues on his Work*, p. 63.
16. V. N. Voloshinov, "Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art," Appendix I, *Freudianism: A Critical Sketch*, by V. N. Voloshinov, trans. I. R. Titunik, ed. in collaboration with Neal Bruss (Bloomington: Indiana Univ., 1976, 1987), pp. 95–96. Hereafter "Discourse." All italics in my quotations from this source are Voloshinov's.
17. For a fuller analysis, see my essay "Mikhail Bakhtin as Rhetorical Theorist," *College English*, 47 (1985), pp. 594–607.
18. R. B. Kershner, *Joyce, Bakhtin, and Popular Literature; Chronicles of Disorder* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina, 1989), pp. 15–16.
19. V. N. Voloshinov, *Freudianism: A Critical Sketch*, trans. I. R. Titunik, ed. in collaboration with Neal Bruss (Bloomington: Indiana Univ., 1976, 1987), p. viii. Hereafter FR.
20. Caryl Emerson, "The Outer Word and Inner Speech: Bakhtin, Vygotsky, and the Internalization of Language," in *Bakhtin: Essays and Dialogues on his Work*, p. 25.
21. Holquist, "Answering," p. 70.
22. For example, see *Rethinking Bakhtin*, pp. 42–44.
23. Michael Holquist, "The Politics of Representation," in *Allegory and Representation: Selected Papers from the English Institute, 1979–80*, ed. Stephen J. Greenblatt (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ., 1981), p. 176.
24. Gary Saul Morson is the only critic I have seen who explicitly characterizes Bakhtin's ambivalent usage of the term "dialogic." See his essay "Dialogue, Monologue, and the Social," in *Bakhtin: Essays and Dialogues on his Work*, pp. 83–84.

25. Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: Univ. of Texas, 1981), p. 279. Hereafter DI.

26. Todorov devotes considerable discussion to this topic, noting that "when Bakhtin adopts a critical stance in this matter, it is not against form or against content (as he was 'against' the individual), but against those who isolate the study of one or the other: the pure ideologists and the pure formalists." *Mikhail Bakhtin*, p. 35.

27. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge: MIT, 1968), p. 195. Hereafter RHW.

28. Kershner, p. 16.

29. This essay was written in 1989–90. In the past year or so, additional scholarship—both primary and secondary—has appeared that further illuminates Bakhtin as a philosopher of language. Unfortunately, it was not possible to incorporate that work within this essay. I wish to state my gratitude to Caryl Emerson (Princeton University), whose careful reading of the typescript has prevented me from making any number of foolish statements in print. I also wish to thank Dana Beckelman (University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee) for her extensive research on my behalf; her efforts allowed me to produce this essay in a timely fashion.

The Revival of Rhetoric