

## CHARACTERS IN BAKHTIN'S THEORY

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The present essay explores the nature of characters and narrators in the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin and his circle.<sup>1</sup> Our project is a hazardous one because Bakhtin's texts do not provide us with a systematic discussion of this problem. As a consequence, it must be understood that the passages we have selected for discussion are taken out of a variety of contexts in his essays. As well, they come from all of his various intellectual periods. We have tried to systematize the concept of character in a series of texts where no such system exists, and we can only hope that ours is the position that Bakhtin would have espoused.

In order to understand his concept of character we must first discard all notions of language as *langue* and think of it rather as *parole*, that is, as a pure product of interpersonal contacts. Bakhtin's conception of character is so original that we feel compelled to define it first by saying what it is not, before being able to explain what it is.

When we try to make sense of Bakhtin, it is advisable to approach his texts with a particular question in mind and to let them answer. In Bakhtin's eyes, this is the way that Dostoevsky, his favorite author, treated the characters of his novels. Once created, they seemed to speak for themselves. The responses obtained from any interview with Bakhtin's texts contain just as many questions as they do answers. Consulting Bakhtin does not simply consist of looking up "character" or "hero" in an index at the back of his books, for Bakhtin does not provide us with indices. It can never be like feeding a question into a computer, because no separate piece of data in the hypothetical print-out would be a logical extension of the others. Bakhtin-data qualify and/or contradict each other when used to answer a single question or a series of questions.

Narrative works of literature are often regarded as monologues emanating from a position of power. Bakhtin's view of narrative, however, as language composed of special sorts of dialogue radically changes the way in which we see characters. They are the sources of dialogue in the text. His view does not lead us to reject the concept of character altogether, unlike that of others who dismiss the very notion of "character and everything it implies in terms of illusion and complicity with classical meaning and the appropriating economy that such a reasoning supports" (Cixous 387). It is important to clarify Bakhtin's conception of character for the simple reason that it occupies a central role in his overall theory of novelistic discourse.

An early article by Bakhtin entitled "The Author and the Hero in Aesthetic Activity,"<sup>2</sup> written between 1922-1924, hints at the new direction of this concept. The article deals with the differing perspectives available to narrators and characters and with the relationship between them. Bakhtin gives examples of the hero's domination of the author, of the author's domination of the hero, and of the hero as his own author.

An important consequence of Bakhtin's view of dialogic discourse in the novel is present in the current rejection among narratologists of the "assumption that a narrative is necessarily a discourse by the narrator" (Banfield 299). This outlook appears to be shared by writers from very different backgrounds such as Julia Kristeva and Hans Robert Jauss.<sup>3</sup> The novel is more than a dialogue between an author and a reader: it is an exchange amongst dialogic positions within the text itself.

Seen against contemporary theory of the concept of character, Bakhtin's proposals occupy an intermediary position. Traditionally, characters are seen as remnants of a writer's past, as mere appendages to his thought. They are presented as incarnations of certain opinions in his intellectual development or of a representative of a social group in his mind. They have been seen as objects of a central monopolistic vision or even as signs of some hidden personality.<sup>4</sup> In opposition to such conceptions, French structuralists sought to free the idea of character from this psychological aura and to promote him primarily as a structuring element of the story.<sup>5</sup> Theorists of the Greimassian school have further reduced characters to the status of products of the plot, or rather of the intrinsic structure and logic of narrative in general.<sup>6</sup> Some modern trends in structuralist criticism do try to combine structural and "human" elements of character in a way that is foreign to the view we take to be Bakhtin's. Fernando Ferrara, for

example, sees the “social personality” of characters as the “essential nucleus” of a middle structure situated between deep structure, social norms and values, and the surface structure of the text (254,263).

Many other features commonly found in a variety of views about character are completely lacking in Bakhtin’s writings. For example, he does not see character as a “cluster of appurtenances”:<sup>7</sup> characters for Bakhtin are not products of their environment, that is, objects in themselves. They are seen as voice sources in the text. Furthermore, Bakhtin is not interested in finding out whom each character is supposed to represent in reality. Nor does he attempt to discuss in detail an onomastic theory of individual characters’ names. This, too, would reduce characters to a mere appendage to a foregone conclusion.

For Bakhtin, a character is not a simple filter of the author’s intentions or desires, nor a mere paper entity devoid of all real significance. Character is not a psychologically based entity nor a simple product of textual structures. Our objective here will be to pinpoint the middle ground that the Bakhtinian character occupies, first by ridding the concept of the psychological aura one might be tempted to attribute to him. In this way we can at least hope to find Bakhtin’s original view of what constitutes the novelistic character.

In this study of his writings on character, we shall use the following five theoretical questions as guideposts for our analysis:

- 1) the concept of the separate character-individual
- 2) unfinishedness<sup>8</sup>
- 3) character as a point of convergence
- 4) the question of hierarchy
- 5) the question of identification.

### 1. *The Concept of the Separate Character-individual*

The polemical text, *Freudianism. A Marxist Critique* (1927), signed by Voloshinov, attacks the very heart of the traditional notion of character. The author refuses to grant the existence of an isolated psychological consciousness in human beings, of the independent, psychological entity upon which we normally base our image of human beings in literary texts. For Bakhtin, the idea of a subjective, isolable consciousness in a human being, and thus in the literary

character, is nothing less than a false notion. The nature of literary character that we seek to define will have to be based elsewhere than in the psychological uniqueness of a separate entity.

We see a development of this position in *Rabelais and His World* (written largely in 1940). As the author notes, characters in ancient literature and especially in Rabelais' works cannot be conceived as something based on a split between inner and outer factors. Novelistic characters were originally universal figures, very often born in carnivalized works where the boundaries between exterior (spectators) and interior (actors) were neatly swept away (RW 7).

In this regard, it is very easy to make an analysis of personalized narrators and characters based on a false premise. As we can discern in reading *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1929), the consciousness of that which we call a character is never a self-contained entity, but rather, like the living ideas that characters incarnate, it is in constant interaction with everything that surrounds it. "In Dostoevsky's works the consciousness is never self-sufficient; it always finds itself in an intense relationship with another consciousness" (PDP 26). "The principle category of Dostoevsky's artistic vision is not evolution, but *coexistence* and *interaction*. He saw and conceived his world chiefly in space, not in time" (PDP 23).

Because of this constant interaction, the boundaries that set off each character are by definition fuzzy and forever moving. In one untranslated essay ("On the Philosophical Bases of the Humanities" [1941] EST 409-11), Bakhtin posits the basic difficulty of knowing others from inside of one's self, an unknowability because each individual has a different perspective and purview. Each individual is unknowable to every other individual precisely because of the different set of experiences, contacts, and range of vision that each individual possesses. In the same respect, the individual is equally unknowable to himself because, given his unique but limited field of vision, there are certain aspects of himself he cannot see. Bakhtin wrote in 1970 that

a person can never really see and interpret as a whole his own outward appearance; mirrors and photographs cannot help him here; only other persons can see and comprehend his outward appearance precisely because they occupy a different spatial plane and because of the fact that they are *not the same*.<sup>9</sup>

But even if he is separate, the individual is nonetheless unisolable, because if we were able to isolate a single individual, that is, to assign him precise boundaries, this would be to presuppose a thorough knowledge of the outer limits of what constitutes an individual. The same can be said of the novelistic character. We cannot determine for a single character specific bounds which unequivocally delimitate him from all other elements of the text. Because he has no perfectly isolable body or psychological entity, the character is in constant interaction with other characters, each of which posits the image of a current passing through the whole of the text, currents which have countless possibilities of confluence and branching apart.

## 2. *Unfinishedness*

It could also be said that characters are in constant contact with an unending generation of ideologemes<sup>10</sup> in and outside of the work (FMLS). The most important of these ideologemes is the very institution of literature which, being formulated by social discourse, in itself without beginning or end (MPL 96), is also a living receptacle of other ideological forms.

The novelistic character must therefore be envisaged against the dialogic background of anonymous social discourse (DI 272). In this context, the speech of characters, alongside of narrators and "inserted genres," must be seen as those components of the novel which allow heteroglossia<sup>11</sup> to enter the text (DI 263). Heteroglossia enters through their discourse. Discourse is in itself to be viewed as a polyphonic conveyor of otherness. Each separate line contains other languages in it, and each character who expresses his field of vision through speech speaks a language which contains the language of others. Social discourse is an unending ebb and tide, and the character who transmits it is therefore a product of unfinishedness.

We now see the unfinished nature of Dostoevsky's creations due to the fact that they are so self-aware, and as a result, undefinable. No matter how the narrator wishes to depict them, they are aware of his commentaries and can easily prove him wrong.

A loophole is the retention for oneself of the possibility to alter the final, ultimate sense of one's word. If the word leaves this

loophole open, then that fact must be inevitably reflected in its structure. This possible other sense, i.e. the open loophole, accompanies the word like a shadow. According to its sense, the word with a loophole must be the last word, and it presents itself as such, but in fact it is only the next-to-last word, and is followed by only a conditional, not a final, period. (PDP 195)

If it is true that a work of art as a whole can achieve a certain "aesthetic" completeness (FMLS 23), characters by contrast are always unfinished. Characters are carriers of social discourse and as such cannot be finished. Furthermore, they enter into the ever changing dialogic world of the reader. The character is twice under dialogic influence. He is unfinished because unisolable, and unfinished because of the social discourse of which he is composed and in which he must participate.

In the essay "Epic and Novel" (1941), character is defined through the retention of his potential capacity, by his power of "incongruity with himself" (DI 37). This is the power to be more than a mere function. As we have seen in Bakhtin's book on Dostoevsky, this aptitude of the character is translated by his constant need to keep in reserve the "last word."

### 3. *Character as a Point of Convergence*

Early texts signed by Voloshinov are particularly useful for understanding Bakhtin's later statements on character. In "Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art" (1926), for example, the word "hero" is used almost as a metaphor for content:

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). (FMC 105)

If we bear in mind this equalizing metaphor of character seen as a special kind of literary content, we can interpret other statements in

which characters are viewed as incarnations of ideas in their capacity as novelistic events (PDP 7) or as ethical subjects who bear the weight of evaluating contemplation (ETR 52). In his study of Dostoevsky's poetics, Bakhtin states that that Russian novelist elaborates in aesthetic terms a "sociology of the consciousness" (PDP 26); that is, we can picture character as the point of intersection of a specific but unspecifiable set of voices in the text. These voices come from that underlying verbal interaction that literary discourse is particularly apt at capturing. Indeed, the ideas expounded in the book *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1929) enable us to understand that this special "content" to which character was earlier assimilated is this same coming together of social voices in literary form. Any possible individuality attributable to a personage "can only be completely discovered and defined in this process of interaction" (FMLS 28). Character is no static, abstract entity but rather an active ingredient in the event of novelistic discourse.

Being active means a character is more than a point of convergence. He is essentially the literary incarnation of a field of vision. He is constituted by a specific purview made up of certain points of view, but is also constituent of others. In the essay "Discourse in the Novel" (1934-1935), Bakhtin speaks of "character zones" (DI 316), zones of influence which infiltrate, as it were, other zones. A character is both a point of convergence and a point of emanation for social voices in the text.

And since characters form an integral and active ingredient in the workings of the novelistic text, and since they are not abstract entities but rather products of "objective" social forces, they are necessarily sensitive to important structural variants of a particular genre (psychological novel, adventure novel, *Bildungsroman*, etc.) and to different genres (novel, epic, drama, tragedy, etc.). A character is always determined by the particular text in which he participates.

The problem one faces in trying to present the novelistic character in Bakhtin's theory lies in the level of abstraction we must reach for. We should remember that for Bakhtin, however, character "in general," that is *in abstracto*, does not exist. He is always part and parcel of a specific aesthetic object serving the communication between a novelist and a reader, and of a specific relationship between narrator and narratee within the text itself.

#### 4. *The Question of Hierarchy*

This point leads us to examine the relationship between narrators, narratees, and characters, as well as those distinguishing features that allow us to differentiate between heroes and minor characters.

Bakhtin states in his essay "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel" (1937-1938) that the problem of the personalized narrator is a problem of modern literature (DI 160- 61). The narrator came into being primarily as a vehicle that allowed the author to see through the eyes of someone else, to speak in the language of someone else. More often than not, this was the foreign language of someone who did not understand, the language of the fool (DI 404-405). The infiltration of otherness in literary discourse is the essential trait which distinguishes the novel from other literary genres.

In the monologic novel, it is the narrator and/or the main character who speak most directly the language of the author. Yet this is only one possibility of novelistic discourse. Characters can also be the organizational center of the novel. In the polyphonic novel, the narrator comes into the line of vision of the self-aware characters. Characters are the narrator's equals. And we can imagine works where characters get out of the control of the narrator, such as Diderot's *Jacques le fataliste*. Depending on the type of insertion afforded someone else's voice, the narrator can submit himself to the character's word, be equal to it, or dominate it.

It is precisely the development of silent, personal reading which historically would have permitted the evolution of the novel as a genre capable of accommodating so many voices in a single line. The fact is that silent reading actualizes no single voice in particular but leaves all the possibilities equally open. The reversibility of the traditional schema that depicts the narrator in control of the speech of characters is that contribution of Bakhtin's poetics which enables us to view characters as currents or zones of influence which pervade every nook and cranny of novelistic discourse. In this sense, narrators are seen to exist on the same plane as other characters. Each character is present in secret ways which only a careful reading can bring forth and detect.

Therefore, it cannot be said that a narrator necessarily dominates the characters in a novel. As Bakhtin notes, even the social status of the main character can impose upon the narrator various

linguistic positions. In this regard, the social rank of the hero can also influence the range of genres open to the author:

The basic stylistic tone of an utterance is therefore determined above all by who is talked about and what his relation is to the speaker—whether he is higher or lower or equal to him on the scale of the social hierarchy. . . . The most important stylistic components of the heroic epic, the tragedy, the ode, and so forth are determined precisely by the hierarchical status of the object of the utterance with respect to the speaker. (FMC 110)

If we assume that the narrator can be subjected to the influence of certain characters, then we must ask what becomes of the author in respect to his creations. We must remember that the author always looms behind the entire dialogic interplay of the novel. He is situated not *in* the various language planes present in the voices of characters, but rather at their point of divergence (DI 48-49). Consequently, we must not consider characters' languages to be simple extensions of the author, for this would be just as gauche, says Bakhtin, as taking characters' grammar mistakes and saying the author has bad grammar (DI 416). Bakhtin argues that we must rid ourselves of the notion that all literary characters are mere incarnations of the author's sole volition. The good novelist manages to create a literary facsimile of that social dialogue which constitutes human language. It is only the poor novelist who cannot produce a viable literary image of social dialogue. Therefore, we must not search for the style of the novelist in the sum of all the stylistic, semantic and syntactic variants in his text, because the unified style of a novelist is something that does not exist. The novel contains *styles*. Furthermore, what would be his own personal style becomes inevitably lost in the general interaction of the characters' and narrators' styles (DI 361). The most important feature of Bakhtin's conception of character is that it allows for, but does not require the full potential of the character to be exposed vis-à-vis narrators.

The character, as a result, once created, lives on in the text not through the power of his creator but solely by virtue of the life given to him by each new reading. We can see character as a sort of latent force in the very pages of a closed text, a force that is ignited with the reader's participation. He is reborn each time, since we can view the novel in its incarnations of fictive entities communicating

amongst one another as the "process of communication *in statu nascendi*" (Merrel 341).

In treating briefly the second question of the hierarchical distinctions between heroes and minor characters, one must concede that this distinction remains on the whole undeveloped in Bakhtin's texts. In *Rabelais and his World*, for example, he often speaks of "heroization" without ever defining the term. He does nevertheless briefly touch on the matter when he says that in the monologic novel it is the hero who transmits the author's point of view (PDP 67; DI 163). Elsewhere he states that it is the hero who can surpass his mere structural and social role in the novel, whereas the minor character remains a mere function (DI 37). We are certainly far from a comprehensive set of criteria for defining the term hero.

It could be nonetheless argued that the wherewithal is provided in Bakhtin's texts to develop such a theory. Minor characters, as distinguished from major characters, would be those whose number of constitutive voices could be easily counted. For the major character, such an exercise would be futile because of his complexity. It is precisely the major character who must contain, as Jauss writes, the "power to surpass all our expectations" (304). Being of uncertain boundaries, the character's voices can be heard where we least expect to find them. He can take on voices that we least expected to hear. We could never count and give the origin of all his voices, and this point tends to confer a negative definition of what would be the hero in Bakhtinian terms.

Still, in this context, we can understand J. Kristeva's claim that Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* presents us with an early sketch of a theory of the subject. We can compare Kristeva's claim to what H. Cixous has written about the concept of character:

So long as we take to be the representation of a true subject that which is only a mask, so long as we ignore the fact that the "subject" is an effect of the unconscious and that it never stops producing the unconscious—which is unanalyzable, uncharacterizable, we will remain prisoners of the monotonous machination that turns every "character" into a marionette. (387)

It is, however, difficult to ascertain if it is a would-be theory of the subject that prompts Bakhtin not to discuss in greater detail the distinction between hero and minor characters or whether it is a linguistically induced oversight brought on by the frequent use of the Russian term "geroj," which can be used generically to cover the

general idea of literary character but which more often than not is used to convey the signified of its English cognate. Thus Bakhtin can semantically slide from one concept to the other as if both had been dealt with extensively. Philippe Hamon, in his article "Pour un statut sémiologique du personnage," notices the same problem of a confusion of the terms "hero" and "character" in Tomashevsky's writings but does not mention the idiomatic peculiarity of Russian itself (160).

### 5. *The Question of Identification*

Whatever the reason for the lack of a thorough discussion of the hero/minor character distinction, whether it be a simple oversight, a conscious refusal, or neither, it is this theoretical hole that keeps Bakhtin from analyzing the phenomenon of the *reader's* identification with characters and specifically with the hero. Indeed, the reader's perception of a hero in connection with a valued set of social givens is what permits this phenomenon to occur.

Any quick reading of Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* readily convinces us that Bakhtin viewed the novelistic character as more than just a paper entity, more than the mere sum of all the passages of a novel referring to the same fictive individual. The literary character attains a special status in the novel over and above that afforded to other linguistic entities of a text precisely because readers happen to be human beings who identify with human figures more readily than with trees, rocks, and the weather, even if all of these elements are fictional entities. We can still question the validity of showing simplistic characters, mirror images of a simplistic view of what constitutes a human being, without rejecting outright the concept of character. In the polyphonic novel the hero is complicated enough to capture the reader's imagination and to lead him into new unexplored grounds beyond, perhaps, the reaches of manipulative ideology.

On the other hand, it would be difficult to contend that Bakhtin chose to ignore the problem of the reader's identification because it is not specific to the novel, whose superiority to other literary genres he wished to demonstrate. The nature of the novelistic hero requires a special kind of understanding by every potential reader, but this question remains nevertheless absent in Bakhtin's writings.

He does provide some bases for such a discussion. We understand that any such discussion must take into account the dialogic

background of the reader. This, we have seen, is a major factor in the unfinishedness of a character and consequently in his capacity to speak to successive generations. The presentification of literature in general carried out by the novel genre is responsible not only for the possibility of dialogic relations between author and characters, but also between reader and characters (DI 32-33). In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin hints that gauging the variance in distance between reader and author and among reader, author, and characters can be a determinant factor in mapping out various modes of satiric and parodic literature, to name but two instances.

The pursuit of the question of the reader's identification with characters in the text could also lead to valuable insights into problems such as the ways in which the culture industry can manipulate its consuming public. It is always important to explore the means by which an author can move a reader through literature, and it is essential to determine what role character plays in this theatre, through his, and not just the author's, relationship with the reader.

Finally, the often latent importance of the role characters play in Bakhtin's theoretical concepts can be seen in the many metaphors where the idea of hero or character is employed. To give but two brief examples, in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, haphazard thoughts unanchored in social contact are compared to "novels without heroes" (MPL 92); in the article "Epic and Novel," Bakhtin speaks of the novel as having become the "leading hero in the drama of literary development" (DI 7). These metaphors underscore what has already been said concerning the positive and active roles that the concept of character fulfills in Bakhtin's thought.

A thorough study of these metaphors would show that this concept of character was ingrained in Bakhtin's writings on literature; were he in fact to be developing a theory of the subject, this theory would not entail a dismissal of the notion of character, but rather a remodelling of it to suit his conception of the novel. The problem of a polyphonic novel presupposes the existence of characters who function not as simple human mannequins but as interdependent sets of voices in the text.

To arrive at our schematic picture of how Bakhtin viewed the concept of character, it was necessary to paste together passages scattered about in different contexts of Bakhtin's multifarious interests. This is a dangerous approach because we may have assumed a constant line of thought throughout his writings. There is no one single Bakhtin, and we have tried to recognize this aspect of his

theoretical texts by letting pertinent passages cross one another dialogically, as it were, in answer to the questions put to them in our study.

The picture sketched in such a manner cannot be a systematic program of how to analyze character à la Bakhtin. Such a system does not exist. As always, Bakhtin's writings, when carefully considered, can lead us to rethink certain literary concepts and prompt us toward new directions. The research of Ann Banfield, for example, is one possible direction in which Bakhtin's "theory" of character could lead us. A study of character in Bakhtinian terms has to concentrate on developing devices for listening for the voices of each character in the most unexpected instances, and this rather than attempting to assign him defined limits through a study of his physical appearance, personality traits, social origins, domicile and such. For Bakhtin, a novelistic character is an unclosed set of intonations, harmonies and overtones that we can assign to one more or less personalized figure of the text, a set of voices actualized in a different manner with each separate reading of the text.

A thorough look at character can lead us in this way to the very essence of dialogue in the novel. Through a study of Bakhtin's conception of characters, we see more clearly how one theoretician managed to throw aside the yoke of a single master's dogmatic voice which has always hampered anyone wishing to use the path of dialogue as a means of reaching for something true.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> By "writings of the Bakhtin circle," we shall refer to the texts cited in our note 2, whether signed by Medvedev, Voloshinov or Bakhtin himself. We believe that all of them were extensively, if not completely, written by Bakhtin.

<sup>2</sup> *Estetika slovesnogo tvorcestva* 7-180. For all references to the texts of the Bakhtin circle, we shall adopt the following abbreviations:

DI: *Dialogic Imagination*

EST: *Estetika slovesnogo tvorcestva*

ETR: *Esthétique et théorie du roman*

FMLS: *Formal Method in Literary Scholarship*

FMC: *Freudianism. A Marxist Critique*

MPL: *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*

PDP: *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*

RW: *Rabelais and his World*.

We wish to express our indebtedness to the late Professor J. Sadouski of Queen's University for his help in grasping certain difficult passages of the article "The Author and the Hero in Aesthetic Activity." There exists a German translation of this important article in *Kunst und Literatur* 6 (1979): 589-601; 7 (1979): 760-79.

<sup>3</sup> Kristeva writes: "L'auteur n'est pas l'instance suprême qui assurerait la vérité de cette confrontation de discours. Sa conception du personnage, d'après Bakhtine, est conception d'un discours (d'un mot), ou mieux, du *discours de l'autre*" (15) ("The author is not the supreme instance who would assure the truth of that confrontation of discourse. His conception of character, according to Bakhtin, is a conception of a discourse [of a word], or better, of the *discourse of the Other*."). The view we wish to show to be Bakhtin's compares with the following statements of Jaus: "We now subscribe universally to an intersubjective conception of character. The classical principle according to which the individual was directly confronted with a general world situation is no longer valid for an understanding of character which sees human individuality in the relativity of social roles" (284).

<sup>4</sup> In this context, see the following exemplary texts: François Mauriac, Alain (325-28), Pol Vandromme and even certain passages of Michel Butor (73-108).

<sup>5</sup> See Roland Barthes.

<sup>6</sup> For two exemplary texts see Algirdas Julien Greimas and Sorin Alexandrescu.

<sup>7</sup> Barbara Hardy (487) quotes from Henry James.

<sup>8</sup> "COMPLETED—finished, closed-off, finalized (*zaveršĕn*) and its noun *zaveršĕnnost'* (completedness, finalization) its antonym *nezaveršĕnnost'* (inconclusiveness, openendedness). This implies not just completed but capable of definite finalization. Dialogue, for example, can be *zaveršĕn* (as in dramatic dialogue)—it can be laid out in all its speaking parts, framed by an opening and a close. A dialogized word, on the other hand, can never be *zaveršĕno*: the resonance or oscillation of possible meanings within it is not only not resolved, but it must increase in complexity as it continues to live. Epic time is *zaveršĕno*; novel-time, the present oriented toward the future, is always *nezaveršĕno*" (DI 426).

<sup>9</sup> Our translation from Tzvetan Todorov (169): "son propre aspect extérieur, l'homme ne peut vraiment le voir et l'interpréter en tant qu'un tout; les miroirs et les photographies ne l'aideront pas; son véritable aspect extérieur ne peut être vu et compris que par d'autres personnes, grâce à leur exotopie spatiale, et grâce au fait qu'ils sont *autres*."

<sup>10</sup> "IDEOLOGY (*ideologija*) ideologue (*ideolog*) ideologeme (*ideologim*): This is not to be confused with its politically oriented English cognate. "Ideology" in Russian is simply an idea system. But it is semiotic in the sense that it involves the concrete exchange of signs in society and in history. Every word/discourse betrays the

ideology of its speaker; great novelistic heroes are those with the most coherent and individuated ideologies. Every speaker, therefore, is an ideologue, and every utterance an ideogeme" (DI 429).

<sup>11</sup> "HETEROGLOSSIA (*raznorecie, raznorecivost'*): The base condition governing the operation of meaning in any utterance. It is that which insures the primacy of context over text. At any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions—social, historical, meteorological, physiological—that will insure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions; all utterances are heteroglot in that they are functions of a matrix of forces practically impossible to recoup, and therefore impossible to resolve. Heteroglossia is as close a conceptualization as is possible of that locus where centripetal and centrifugal forces collide; as such, it is that which a systematic linguistics must always suppress" (DI 428).

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