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Funny Things are Happening
on the Way to the Bakhtin Forum

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FUNNY THINGS ARE HAPPENING ON THE WAY TO THE BAKHTIN FORUM

I

In George Seaton's movie, *Miracle on 34th Street*, a judge in court acknowledges the real-life existence of Santa Claus after he has been given indisputable material evidence of it--to wit, several sacks of letters addressed to said resident of the North Pole. If documentary sources are powerful enough to prove the existence of such a mythological figure, they will surely have the strength to clear up several hazy details in the biographies of real people. This tactic of supporting theoretical hypotheses with material evidence can be recommended to many contemporary Bakhtin scholars.

Better knowledge of documents is essential in resolving two types of problems. First, it puts us on solid ground when we discuss the obscure question of Bakhtin and his immediate surroundings. Second, an authentic description of these cultural surroundings puts the complicated issues of authors and heroes, and authoring and authorship, in clearer perspective. These are ambiguous issues which have teleological as well as purely material, documentary explanations. By indicating the second problem as "authors and heroes," I have in mind the role that we literary scholars play as authors of various studies of Bakhtin's writings, and the role he plays in them as hero. Each author has his or her hero. A polyphonic conception of authoring and interpersonal understanding within the architectonic and compositional whole¹ of the speaker's self allow us, as authors, to draw our hero (Bakhtin, the

¹ For the "architectonics"- "composition" dichotomy in Bakhtin, see "Problema sodержaniia, materiala i formy v slovesnom khudozhestvennom tvorchestve" in M.M. Bakhtin, *Voprosy literatury i estetiki* (Moscow, 1975), pp. 17-21.

subject of discussion) into dialogue with our academic, authorial selves. In those beguiled dialogues, the whole scenario, including the rejoinders of others, are ours. As a result, the hero's discourse takes on overtones of authorial mannerisms, and the hero's individual intonation grows faint. With only the smallest effort on the author's part, his ideas win over those of the hero.

Since there are many authors, there are several "Bakhtins" as well. Gary Saul Morson was astute and on target when he noticed the bizarre series of transformations that Bakhtin has undergone: M.M. Bakhtin the structuralist, Slavophile, neo-Marxist, and theologian.² One can be sure that many more such transmogrifications are in the offing. In fact, these whimsical figures are called to life by Bakhtin himself, since the latent power of his dialogic imagination makes him an ideal interlocutor for any partner at any time (a realization of the "I and "Thou" principle). Yet contemporary experts address, not an actual interlocutor, but the text--the finalized product of Bakhtin's dialogic activity, and in so doing they "misconstrue the text so as to extract from it meanings required by their own theoretical stand"--a situation reminiscent of another recent war during which much ink was spilled as the deconstructors were deconstructed.³ In both cases, the sign (or a monologic interpretation) overcomes meaning (the polyphonic content) and synchronic interpretation contradicts diachronic development.

² G.S. Morson, "The Heresiarch of Meta," *PTL* 3 (1978) pp. 407-27; "The Bakhtin Industry," *Slavic and East European Journal*, 30:1 (Spring 1986), pp. 81-87.

³ Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), pp. 14-17; J. H. Miller 5:2 (Summer 1975), pp. 30-31.

II

Those who accept the validity of polyphonic discourse cannot make an exception for Bakhtin, and ignore the significance of another person's utterance within the framework of Bakhtin's own intellectual development. Bakhtin's own theories include various reaccented and modified ideas of other thinkers and, reaccented, they retain the plurivocal quality of the intellectual context of the 1910s and 1920s. Thus, if these contemporary Bakhtin experts-authors yield to the heroes and protagonists of the 1910s and 1920s, the latter will provide material evidence for a nondistorted history of Bakhtin's ideas.

One illustration will suffice. In 1912, Hermann Cohen's students and colleagues presented him with a *Festschrift* to honor his seventieth birthday. The University of Marburg was represented by five contributors, the most significant of whom was Paul Natorp, Cohen's closest colleague and a friend and teacher of Matvey Kagan. Natorp's paper, "Free Will and Responsibility," is indispensable as a guide to the logic of Bakhtin's early writings. Placing "Art and Responsibility" and "Author and Hero" back into this genuine neo-Kantian context helps to trace the speculative operations Bakhtin undertook in his interpretation of the communal and the social as cognitive modules of the self, as well as in his move to introduce the individual consciousness of the self into the responsive, free-will communal activities of others.⁴ The Natorp-Bakhtin illustration is only one of many primary sources that inspired Bakhtin's work, and all await their definitive integration into his creative biography.

⁴ *Philosophische Abhandlungen. Herman Cohen zum 70stem Geburtstag (4 July 1912) dargebracht.* (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1912), pp. 203-232.

III

The Bakhtin Forum initiated by the *Slavic and East European Journal* (SEEJ) in the spring of 1986 was a critical success.⁵ It evoked a lively discussion that resulted in a follow-up "Bakhtin Forum Two" for a 1988 issue of the journal. "Forum One" was centered primarily on the authenticity of works and ideas originated by, or attributed to, Bakhtin. Since the participants of the Forum operated within the limited number of texts by Bakhtin and members of his circle, the discussion served merely to polarize their old theoretical positions rather than bring to resolution the more vexing and significant issue: **who is who** in the Bakhtin circle. The forthcoming Forum Two will discuss the place of Bakhtin's theories in the intellectual culture of the 1920s.

After SEEJ 1988 had already been mapped, new chunks of Bakhtin's legacy and valuable biographical material from numerous Soviet archives were published in the Soviet Union.⁶ The publications shed new light on the obfuscated areas of Bakhtin studies and encouraged continuation of the Forums, thus bringing to life "Bakhtin Forum Two and a Half."

Among the new publications, the most important are several chapters from the untitled philosophical treatise by Bakhtin which has been edited by Sergei

⁵ *Slavic and East European Journal*, 30:1 (Spring 1986), pp. 81-102. The participants in the discussion are G.S. Morson, "The Bakhtin Industry," pp. 81-90; I.R. Titunik, "The Bakhtin Problem: Concerning Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist's *Mikhail Bakhtin*," pp. 91-95; K. Clark and M. Holquist, "A Continuing Dialogue," pp. 96-102.

⁶ M.M. Bakhtin, "Arkhitektonika postupka," ed. S.G. Bocharov, *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia* 1986:2 (April-June), 157-170; M.M. Bakhtin, "K filosofii postupka," ed. S.G. Bocharov, *Filosofia i sotsiologiya nauki i tekhniki* (Moscow: Nauka 1986), 80-160; M.M. Bakhtin "Avtor i geroi v esteticheskoi deiatel'nosti (fragment pervoi glavy)," ed. S.G. Bocharov and V. Kozhinov, in *Literaturno-kriticheskie stat'i* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1986), pp. 5-26.

Bocharov under the titles "Arkhitektonika postupka", "K filosofii postupka," and "Avtor i geroi v esteticheskoi deiatel'nosti (fragment pervoi glavy)." These new publications are both encouraging and frustrating for the student of Bakhtin. It is an achievement to decipher, annotate, and prepare for publication a hundred-odd pages of Bakhtin's manuscripts (seventy-five pages of printed text). However, when placed next to one another, Bocharov's highly selective publications impede proper textual attribution and textological analysis of the whole. At the present time, some Bakhtinian fragments are known in three non-identical but overlapping versions--as published in "K filosofii postupka," "Avtor i geroi v esteticheskoi deiatel'nosti (fragment pervoi glavy)," and in the 1979 publication of the "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity." Other identical passages are published twice--in "Arkhi-tektonika postupka" and "K filosofii postupka," and in "K filosofii postupka" in 1979. The contextual framing of the duplicated fragments varies from publication to publication. Finally, the largest available fragment, "K filosofii postupka," does not integrate smoothly into the textual fabric of "Author and Hero," at least as this work is known from its 1979 publication. In many instances, the epistemological, thematic, and compositional connection of "K filosofii postupka" to "Author and Hero" has to be simply divined. An attempt at thorough textological analysis of the accumulated fragments will make the subject of an individual study.

Articles by Sergei Konkin, Marietta Chudakova, and Evgeniia Toddes, based on archival research, have provided new information on Bakhtin's life and his cultural milieu.⁷ In addition, several posthumous publications of works by Lev

⁷ S.S. Konkin, "M.M. Bakhtin. Kritiko-biograficheskoi ocherk," *Problemy nauchnogo nasledia M.M. Bakhtina. Mezhvuzovskii sbornik nauchnykh trudov* (Saransk: 1985), pp. 5-24; M.O. Chudakova, E.A. Toddes, "Tynianov v vospomi-

Pumpianskii, prefaced by N. Nikolaev's succinct survey of his life and work, broaden essentially our understanding of the scholarly production of the Bakhtin circle.⁸

Reading new publications of Bakhtin's texts and studying documents and memoirs on Russian intellectual culture of the 1910s and 1920s leaves one with the peculiar feeling of reading Bakhtin's papers over his shoulder. Against this background, several problematic places in his early writings cease to look like gaps in his manuscripts. Although we are not yet able to fill in words that have been erased from the text, several omitted ideational complexes reappear, almost as if they had been written in invisible ink.

Step by step, shelves in the imagined private library of Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin are being filled by books and manuscripts, and the volumes are arranged topically and by subjects. The first shelf is allocated to the writings of the university professors from whom the young Bakhtin took courses in Classical Studies and in European Philosophy. On this shelf one also finds academic works recommended by these teachers to their students for thorough reading. On the second shelf one finds small brochures, articles, and unpublished manuscripts written by Bakhtin himself and by his friends, participants in various Kantian and neo-Kantian seminars: Matvei Kagan, Lev Pumpianskii, Pavel Medvedev, Ivan Kanaev, and Valentin Voloshinov. One also finds here books and papers whose authorship (Mikhail Bakhtin and/or his friends?) has incited, in our time, temperamental discussions, such as the recent "Bakhtin Forum" in the *Slavic and East European Journal*. *The Bakhtin Newsletter*, nos. 1-2, *Mikhail Bakhtin* by Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist,

naniakh sovremennika," *Tynianovskii sbornik. Pervyi Tynianovskie chteniia* (Riga: Zinatne, 1984), pp. 78-104.

⁸ *The Bakhtin Newsletter* 2 (1986), pp. 31-34.

and factual information from Bocharov, Konkin, Chudakova, and Toddes provide guidelines for the layout and content of this imagined library.⁹

There is, of course, a third bookshelf in Bakhtin's auxiliary library, and one finds on its several volumes of Kant, Cohen, Natorp, Rickert, Dilthey, Husserl, as well as the writings of Sergei Solov'ev, Fedorov, and, in all probability, Pavel Florenskii. Consulting with these texts is imperative for any textual analysis of "K filosofii postupka," "Arkhitektonika postupka," and "Author as Hero." A preliminary study of these and several other philosophical and aesthetic sources has been recently undertaken by Vadim Liupanov and incorporated into his scholarly commentary to his forthcoming English translation of "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity."

Following the guidelines provided by Bakhtin's biographers, one learns that he studied foreign languages at Petrograd University: Greek (with I.I. Tolstoi), Latin (with Professor Malein), French, German, and English. He also took courses from Professor A. Vvedenskii, R. Lange, and F. Zelinskii in Philosophy, Linguistics, and History of Ancient Greek Theater and Drama.¹⁰

Additional valuable information, in a detailed description of the intellectual atmosphere that dominated Petrograd University in 1914-18, has been provided by Iulian Grigor'evich Oksman.

IV

Iulian Grigor'evich Oksman (1895-1970) was born in the same year as Bakhtin. He studied at Petersburg University at the same time as Bakhtin and, again like Bakhtin, developed there an interest in "the literature of the early

⁹ *The Bakhtin Newsletter* 1(1983), 2(1986); Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 1984).

¹⁰ Clark and Holquist, pp. 30-33; Konkin, pp. 5-6.

medieval period, French fabliaux, and Latin manuscripts."¹¹ Oksman maintained contact with the young Formalist scholars from Vengerov's seminar, yet he remained critical of their radical innovations. He graduated from the university in 1917, but remained affiliated with his department until the summer of 1918 (the year of Bakhtin's graduation).

In the late 1920s, Oksman, Bakhtin, and Pumpianskii were working together for Gosizdat, where they prepared for publication several volumes of *Collected Literary Works* by Lev Tolstoy (Bakhtin) and Ivan Turgenev (Oksman and Pumpianskii) under the editorial supervision of K. Khalavaev and B. Eikhenbaum.¹² Like Bakhtin in 1936, Oksman was arrested. Having served his ten-year sentence in hard labor camps, he was allowed to work for provincial universities, and he spent another ten years in the city of Saratov. In 1956, Oksman left Saratov for Moscow, where he, like Bakhtin, remained affiliated with the Institute of World Literature (IMLI) and worked for the *Literary Heritage* (*Literaturnoe Nasledstvo*) series.

Famous for his powerful memory, Oksman has provided us with precise information about the situation in the humanities during his youth, and he offers a general matrix for further research in this area. Recalling Tynianov's early education, Oksman mentions the academic courses that were given during 1913-18. He names the most influential philosophical and aesthetical trends of this time and refers to the original thinkers and their populizers in university circles (Rickert, Dilthey, Losskii, Zelinskii, Vvedenskii). In combination with the biographical studies of Bakhtin undertaken by Clark,

¹¹ Chudakova and Toddes, pp. 78-91; 92.

¹² "The Chronological Bibliography of Works by M.M. Bakhtin, 1929" (6); "1930" (8); "The Chronological Bibliography of Works by L.V. Pumpianskii, 1929" (10,11); "1930" (12-16) in *The Bakhtin Newsletter* 2 (1986), pp. 32-33.

Holquist, and Konkin, Oksman's memoirs suggest a new avenue for a more detailed and documented inquiry into the authentic cultural context of the 1910s and 20s. The chronotope of the Academy in 1913-18 is the university classroom, which generated a complex of several types of dialogue, all of which were important for Bakhtin's future: conversations between the post-symbolist generation of university professors and their students; discussions between the young neo-Kantians and the early formalists; struggles between the partisans of the natural and the human sciences.¹³ A careful reconstruction of the "life of ideas"¹⁴ during these years would bring us closer to the center of the troubled maze of authoring and authorship. Oksman offers us Ariadne's thread through the labyrinth of archival data.

Oksman recalls that the young Tynianov, as well as his other friends, had great respect for Professor Faddei Zelinskii (Tadeusz Zielinski). From Clark and Holquist we learn that, at the university, Bakhtin was influenced by "the great classicist T. Zielinski." Some of Bakhtin's key concepts can be traced back to suggestions found in Zielinski's works.¹⁵ But as a student in the Classical Department, Bakhtin was also required to take courses from another faculty celebrity, Professor Ivan Ivanovich Tolstoi (1880-1954), who taught the Greek language and lectured on the history of ancient cults and rituals. His lectures attracted young intellectuals from all over Petrograd, and Bakhtin's friend Lev Pumpianiskii, the pianist Mariia Iudina, and the poet and prose writer Konstantin Vaginov were often seen in Tolstoi's classroom.

¹³ Chudakova and Toddes, pp. 93-94.

¹⁴ This expression comes from the title of F. Zelinskii's (Tadeusz Zielinski) collection of articles, *Iz zhizni idei* (Petrograd, 1916). Bakhtin's theory of genres is directly related to ideas developed in Zelinskii's articles "Ideia npravstvennogo opravdaniia," 1-4, and "Proiskhozhdenie komedii."

¹⁵ Chudakova and Toddes, p. 93; Clark and Holquist, pp. 30-3.

(In her memoirs, Iudina describes Tolstoi's lectures on the history of hellenistic religious cults as "an ecstasy of cognition.")¹⁶ While teaching language courses, Tolstoi was responsible for translating the major body of early Greek prose into Russian. In his seminars, he raised a group of young scholars who translated Lucian, Longus, Chariton, Heliodorus--in short, the very Greek authors that Bakhtin discusses in the pages of his essay "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope of the Novel." Professor Tolstoi worked on menippean dialogues and translated the famous "Lover of Lies" by Lucian. He also encouraged his students, a group of enthusiasts who frequently published their translations under the collective pen name ABDEM (from A. Boldyrev, A. Dovatur, A. Egunov, and E. Visel/Mustel), to start working on Lucian and Philostratus.¹⁷ Lucian castigated the late Sophists in his satirical dialogues; Philostratus compiled *The Lives of the Sophists* (Zhizneopisanie, bios), and also wrote *The Life of Apollonius of Tiana*. The narrative structure of *Apollonius of Tiana* enjoys the reputation of a "boundary genre," since it is a poetic precursor of Christian hagiography as well as the first attempt at creating a fictional life--that is, a biographical novel. The aesthetic and philosophical aspects of this work are ambiguous, for, as Tolstoi demonstrated, it betrays several features of ritualistic heathen and early pre-Christian folklore.¹⁸ At the university, Tolstoi taught his students to

¹⁶ M.V. Iudina, *Stat'i. Vospominania. Materialy* (Moscow: Sovremennii kompozitor, 1978), pp. 220, 238, 32, 338, 291, 347, 259.

¹⁷ E. Rabinovich, "Zhizn' Apolloniia Tianskogo" (Moscow: Nauka, 1985), p. 277. The group ABDEM maintained friendly relations with V. Pumpianskii (a participant of the Bakhtin circle) and K. Vaginov (of the OBERIU group). The literary activity of ABDEM is one more manifestation of the priority given to authoring over authorship. For the biographical essay and bibliography of works by and on I.I. Tolstoi, see I. Tronskii, *I.I. Tolstoi* (Moscow: AN SSSR, 1955).

¹⁸ I.I. Tolstoi, "K sodержaniuu antichnykh terminov 'aretalog' i 'aretalogiia' in his *Stat'i o fol'klоре* (Moscow-Leningrad: Nauka, 1966), pp. 175-181.

understand folklore, not as a product of a bygone era related exclusively to pre-literate forms of art, but as a cultural universe and inexhaustible source for people's creative energies. According to Tolstoi, folklore provides a holistic expression of people's life and, therefore, as an aesthetic category, is "uninterrupted" in culture. He had a sharp eye for various types of poetic reincarnations of primaeval artistic forms and genres.

Bakhtin owes to I.I. Tolstoi several theoretical assertions on the bivalent genesis of the genre, as well as his interest in popular culture, ritual, and menippea in their authentically historical, as well as their modern, reaccented renditions. A clear echo of Tolstoi's ideas can also be heard in Pumpianskii's works originating from 1921-23, where he traces the dichotomy of the tragic and comic and the corresponding binary groups in literary genres and in the creative personalities of artists.¹⁹ Most of Vaginov's novels and many of his poems are poetic experiments that "inoculate" menippea into modern literature.²⁰ Finally, Tolstoi's ideas on the folklore genesis of aesthetic categories of the ancient world (metaphor, plot, genre, structure) find a productive and nontraditional development in the works of Ol'ga Freidenberg, whose article, "Fol'klor u Aristofana," is an example of this methodological kinship.²¹ Freidenberg's achievements in the "paleontology of culture" provide an adequate dialogical counterpart to the Bakhtinian

¹⁹ L.V. Pumpianskii, *Dostoevskii i antichnost'* (Petrograd, 1921); "K istorii russkogo klassitsizma," *Kontekst 1982* (Moscow: Nauka, 1983), pp. 303-35; "Gogol'," *Uchenyi zapiski Tartusskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, vyp. 664 (Tartu: TGU, 1984), pp. 125-37. The last two articles were published posthumously. Academic interest in Pumpianskii has been greatly stimulated by the international attention given to the Bakhtin Circle.

²⁰ N. Perlina, "Vaginov," in the forthcoming *Histoire de la littérature russe*, ed. E. Étkind (Librairie Artheme Fayard), vol. IV.

²¹ *Sergeiu Fedorovichu Ol'denburgu, Sbornik statei* (Leningrad: AN SSSR, 1934), pp. 549-60.

concepts of menippea, carnival, and chronotope. Bakhtin directly referred to her study, *The Poetics of the Subject Matter and Genre*, in his book on Rabelais.²²

In order to be more responsive to all the overtones of Bakhtinian intonation, therefore, we should train our ear to distinguish the individual voices of other speakers: his contemporary opponents and their interlocutors. It would be both incorrect and counterproductive to credit Bakhtin with exclusive authorship of a new approach to menippea and the teleology of literary genres, as has been done in several recent publications. Such pronouncements, often made without reservations, view Bakhtin in a cultural vacuum. For Bakhtin, on the contrary, culture was never a vacant, mute object. Culture always "spoke" to him and he spoke back to it. In many instances, culture co-authored with him several seminal ideas.²³

²² M.M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), p. 54.

²³ Léna Szilard, "Menipeia," *Russian Literature* 17 (1985), pp. 61-70. Szilard's other article, "Karnaval'noe soznanie, karnavalizatsiia," *Russian Literature* 18 (1985), pp. 151-76, is free of such methodological errors. To Szilard's credit, she successfully achieves an exposition of Bakhtin's attempt to reunite several aesthetic and anthropological treatments of carnival: Vjach, Ivanov, S. Freud, K. Jung, H. Bergson, and D.S. Likhachev. Another example of Bakhtin's dialogic co-authoring and cooperating with the culture of the 1920s was his treatment of "form, material, and content in the verbal arts." To continue an exchange of ideas about aesthetics was no less important for him than to win arguments with his opponents. In this respect, Konkin's biographical article shared the same methodological deficiencies as Szilard's work on Menippea. As if the ideas developed by Eikhenbaum, Tynianov, Vinogradov, and the other Formalists had not been rediscovered in contemporary literary studies, Konkin finds no better epithets to characterize their achievements than "formalist pretentiousness," "antiscientific theories," "creeping empiricism" (pp. 11-13). He also ascribes to Bakhtin priority in introducing the idea of "speech genres" (*rechevyje zhanry*), which was in fact Vinogradov's innovation.

According to Konkin, Bakhtin took courses in Philosophy from Professor Aleksandr Ivanovich Vvedenskii (1856-1925). The head of the Philosophy Department, Vvedenskii adhered to neo-Kantian theories. Under his influence, indicates Oksman, all the university students of his generation "vociferously argued with vulgar materialism,... and, following Dilthey and Rickert, juxtaposed the Human Sciences to the Natural Sciences."²⁴ At Petrograd University, Vvedenskii taught introductory courses in Logic, Philosophy, History of Classical Philosophy, and Modern Philosophy. Advanced courses and seminars were taught by his assistants, Professor Ivan Ivanovich Lapshin (1870-1952) and Nikolai Onufrievich Losskii (1870-1965).²⁵ Their writings were well known to Bakhtin.

From Lapshin, Bakhtin obtained detailed information on such topics as creative intuition, psychology of creativity, and the other person's "Self." (Lapshin's *Problema chuzhogo "ja" v noveishei filosofii*, which treated one's own and another person's "Self" as a "psycho-genetic and gnoseological problem," is briefly mentioned by Clark and Holquist.)²⁶ In his collections, *Artistic Creativity* (*Khudozhestvennoe tvorchestvo*) and *The Philosophy of Invention and Invention in Philosophy* (*Filosofia izobreniia i izobrenie v filosofii*), Lapshin drew generously on works, memoirs, letters, and diaries of Russian and European thinkers, writers, and artists. He also provided an elaborate terminological apparatus to the philosophy of the "Self" and the psychology of the other's creative activity: intuiting of another person's

²⁴ Chudakova, Toddes, p. 93.

²⁵ N.O. Losskii, *Vospominania* (Munich: W. Fink Verlag, 1968), p. 129.

²⁶ I.I. Lapshin, *Problema "chuzhogo -Ja-" v noveishei filosofii* (St. Petersburg: Senatskaia tipografiia, 1910). Clark and Holquist had wrongly identified the author as F.P. Lapshin (p. 133).

"self," the author's intention, and experimenting with and experiencing another person's "I." From the position of taxonomy, Lapshin classified intellectual and intuitive processes as they coalesced and contributed to an author's creative activity.²⁷ Taken together, his descriptive studies on the individual's creative activity made it clear to Bakhtin that each semantic component of the phrase "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity" has to be re-visioned from a new philosophical perspective--from the position of "the philosophy of human activity and relational acts."²⁸ In the mid-1920s and early 1930s, the writings of Lapshin were also of great use to Pavel Medvedev in his "Psychology of Artistic Creativity in Recent Years" (*Psikhologiya khudozhestvennogo tvorchestva za poslednie gody*) and *In the Writer's Laboratory* (*V laboratorii pisatelja*).²⁹

While Lapshin's works can be viewed as a springboard catapulting Bakhtin into the world of philosophical aesthetics, the ideas of Nikolai Losskii helped him to map the limits of this original philosophical discipline. The author of *The World as an Organic Whole*, an explication of his "new system of metaphysics: organic ideal-realism,"³⁰ Losskii was an ardent advocate of Intuitivism. His book, *The Intuitive Philosophy of Henry Bergson* (Intuitiv-

²⁷ I.I. Lapshin, *Khudozhestvennoe tvorchestvo* (Petrograd: Mysl', 1922), pp. 105-108, 116-122. *Filosofia izobreteniia i izobretenie v filosofii* (Praga, 1924) 2, pp. 317-335 ("the architectonics and composition of the concept of Universe," p. 317; synopsis of the intuitive [emotive] and speculative [cognitive] processes in gnoseology, 331-333).

²⁸ M.M. Bakhtin, "K filosofii postupka," p. 96; "Arkhitektonika postupka," p. 160; "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity" (1979), p. 22.

²⁹ P.N. Medvedev, "Psikhologiya khudozhestvennogo tvorchestva za poslednie gody," *Zvezda*, 1926, 2, pp. 263-266. *V laboratorii pisatelja* (Leningrad: Izd. pisatelei, 1933), pp. 7-28. (The fragments were not included in 1960 and 1971 posthumous editions).

³⁰ For an English translation, see Nicholas O. Lossky, *The World as an Organic Whole*, trans. Natalie Duddington (London: Oxford University Press, 1928); S. Levitskii, preface to N. Losskii, *Dostoevskii i ego khudozhestvennoe miroponimanie* (N.Y., 1953), p. 1.

naia filosofii Anri Bergsona) had been published in three editions: in 1911, 1914, and 1922. The young Bakhtin knew Losskii's work on Bergson and referred to it in all his early manuscripts.³¹ In brief, Bakhtin endorsed Losskii's gnoseology when the latter analyzed the philosophical foundations of creative energy and cultural memory. In Losskii, Bakhtin found a proper balance between the *ergon* (an achievement, a ready-made product of human culture) and *energeia* (the process of achieving, an incessant, dynamic progression from past to future). Losskii's understanding of the material world, time, and space as a multileveled hierarchy of "modes of activity of substantial agents" stimulated Bakhtin to build his own "philosophy of the act," the suggestive prolegomena to "a philosophy of the unique and singular event of existence" (*o edinom i edinstvennom bytii-sobytii*).³²

After the Bolshevik Revolution, Losskii continued to lecture on German philosophical idealism and free will. In 1920-21, he organized a pro-seminar, "Materialism, Hylozoism, Vitalism," in order to dispute materialism.³³ This was his last attempt to argue with his philosophical opponents within the academy, for in September 1921, he was expelled from the university (along with many contemporary philosophers) and in 1922, he was sent out of the country. His last publication in Soviet Russia, a brochure, *Sovremennyi vitalizm*, came out in 1922, shortly before his expulsion.³⁴ Less than four years later, M. Bakhtin, under the name of his friend Kanaev (as we learn from

³¹ "K filosofii postupka," pp. 91-92; "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity" (1979), p. 56.

³² Nicholas Lossky, "Intuitivism," *Russian Philosophy*, ed. James M. Edie, and others (Knoxville: the University of Tennessee Press, 1984) III, pp. 316, 329; Bakhtin, "K filosofii postupka," pp. 82, 86, 106; "Arkhitektonika postupka," p. 165.

³³ N. Losskii, *Vospominania*, p. 212.

³⁴ N. Losskii, *Sovremennyi vitalizm*, (Petrograd: Voennaia tipografiia Shtaba R.K.K.A., 1922.

the Clark and Holquist biography), published a twenty-two page article entitled "Sovremennyi vitalizm" in a popular Soviet journal, *Man and Nature*.³⁵

Including Losskii's brochure on vitalism into a discussion of Bakhtin's vexing texts is like sowing the wind and reaping a whirlwind. With two exceptions (one introductory passage and four concluding pages in the second number of the journal), Kanaev/Bakhtin's article is a studied copy of several chunks cut from the first part of Losskii's work. Similarities start with the identical titles and include the compositional and thematic identity of presentation. Even the illustrations to the texts (regeneration of Tubularia) are the same and taken from the same original source: H. Driesch's *Philosophie des Organischen*, Bd. I.³⁶ For those curious enough to double-check the replications of Losskii in Kanaev/Bakhtin, the following list will be of help: (1) Three directions in modern natural science, L, pp. 1-5; K/B. 1, pp. 33-34; (2) The scientific foundations of contemporary vitalism as opposed to the ancient idea of entelechy, L, pp. 5-8; K/B 1, pp. 35-39; (3) Basic regularities recovered in neo-vitalist experiments and their meaning, L, pp. 9-43; K/B. 11, pp. 9-18.

At this point, one should note that Kanaev/Bakhtin's cursory popular article was written *in support* of the materialistic approach to the natural sciences. They ignored the experimental, scientific, and philosophical determination of entelechy (in Losskii, pp. 13-19). If one makes the necessary

³⁵ I. Kanaev, "Sovremennyi vitalizm," *Chelovek i priroda*, 1926, I, pp. 33-42; II, pp. 9-22. For a discussion of authorship, see *Mikhail Bakhtin*, pp. 146, 171-76; Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, "A Continuing Dialogue," *Slavic and East European Journal* 30:1, pp. 96-7; I.R. Titunik, "The Bakhtin Problem," *Slavic and East European Journal* 30:1, pp. 93-5.

³⁶ In Kanaev/Bakhtin, vol. II, p. 13, the work is erroneously cited as *Philosophie des Organismus*, which is obviously a typographical error since in vol. I, p. 38 one finds a correct reference to the same source.

effort to understand entelechy (E) and equipotentiality (S) according to Losskii and Driesch, it becomes clear that the philosophical meaning of the formulaic expression $S=f(a, g, E)$ corresponds to the category of cultural memory. In his literary work, Bakhtin introduces the "memory of the genre" as an aesthetic quality that has a precise formulaic expression. In *Contemporary Vitalism*, Losskii writes:

"E is a unique factor in Nature.... One has to conceive of it as of intensive multifariousness, or compound tensity (*slozhnaia napriazhennost'*). The intensive multifariousness functions in space, yet is not a spatial factor by itself, thus it is not a material mechanistic unit or aggregation."

Among other things, E (or entelechy) "defines the harmony of complex processes of restitution." This philosophical formulation of Losskii's agrees essentially with Bakhtin's philosophical and aesthetic lexicon as it is known throughout his life, especially in his early works and his later ones, "The Problem of Speech Genres" and "Notes Made in 1970-71."³⁷

Beginning with his seminal *The World as an Organic Whole* (1915), Losskii interprets entelechy as an extratemporal, intuited category that generates and implements all the simultaneous and multifocal correlations of parts within the organism. With the exception of the gnoseological dilemma of whether a living being can be endowed with a vision of its own self, Losskii's "intuited" and Bakhtin's "posited" (as discussed in "Author and Hero") are reciprocal, rather than diametrically opposed and mutually exclusive, concepts. The principle gnoseological difference between Losskii (in *The World as an Organic Whole*) and Bakhtin (in "Author and Hero") is in their examina-

³⁷ N. Losskii, *Sovremennyi vitalizm* 13, pp. 18-9; M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Essays*, trans. Vern W. McGee (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), pp. 135-37.

tion of consciousness. Losskii is a supporter of "idealistic monism," while Bakhtin supports "the relation to the other." The three basic elements in Losskii's Intuitivism are the self, a content, and a relation of "having" between the self and the content. Bakhtin's system, as we know it, rests upon the reciprocal relationship between the self and the other.³⁸

Bakhtin was very familiar with Losskii's writings, and he had already formulated his polemical conclusions about Intuitivist philosophy and aesthetics before the disguised text on vitalism appeared in *Man and Nature* under the name Kanaev. Without denying the validity of Kanaev's statement that Bakhtin had published at least one text under his name, we are still not sure whether Bakhtin *actually wrote the article*. What we can now clearly see is that in 1926, Bakhtin had copied several parts of Losskii's brochure on vitalism for his friend Kanaev. Yet who of the two men was the author of the 1926 text "Sovremennyi vitalizm"? Who of the two was more in touch with carnivalesque mystifications and who was better informed about the political situation in the natural sciences and the philosophy of Marxism? In 1926, who thumb one's nose at GORLIT and to drag several chunks of Losskii's writings, which had already stopped circulating in the country, through the machinery of Soviet censorship was indeed an act of comic carnival. But to revamp Losskii's statements in such a way that they became antipodes of the ideas

³⁸ N. Losskii, "Intuitivizm," *Russian Philosophy*, III, pp. 321-23, 330-31. A comparative study of the early twentieth century rendition of intuitivism, vitalism, and neo-Kantianism in Russia awaits writing. The leading figures in both groups, as well as their works, are well known. Losskii's article "Intuitivism" was first published in English translation in 1913-14, and more recently it was included in *Russian Philosophy*, III, pp. 315-342. A bibliography is included. The Russian neo-Kantians (S. Gessen, F. Stepun, B. Jakovenko) were centered around the German-Russian publication *Logos*. For Bakhtin's discussion of Intuitivist aesthetics, see: "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity" (1979), pp. 55-79.

proclaimed in the original is opportunism rather than carnival. Was Bakhtin an opportunist? To attack the philosophical foundation of vitalism in 1926 was more like kicking a dead body than conducting a mature polemic with an equal opponent. By then, the battle between the mechanists (with Stepanov as the key figure) and the Marxist philosophers (with Deborin as leader) had already reached its culmination, and despite the uncompromising positions of the different factions, both had unreservedly agreed to label vitalism "an inadmissible, erroneous manifestation of bourgeois science."³⁹

VI

The search for documentary evidence will scarcely lead us any further. Contributing to the Bakhtin forum, however, gives an additional license to discuss the other participants' views. One can readily agree with Professor I. R. Titunik when he treats the issue of disputed authorship with greater caution than Clark and Holquist, and argues in favor of close textual analysis of the works published under the names of Voloshinov, Medvedev, and Kanaev.⁴⁰ Elsewhere, I have expressed my reservations about attributing to Bakhtin works signed by the participants of the circle of Bakhtin.⁴¹ In my opinion, Profes-

³⁹ See David Joravsky, *Soviet Marxism and Natural Science* (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1961), pp. 93-229; and V. Soifert, "Lysenkoisty i ikh sud'by," *Kontinent*, 1986, no. 47, pp. 267-303; no. 48, pp. 267-305. In his essay, Soifert quotes lavishly from Ol'ga Lepeshinskaia's brochure, "Militant Vitalism" (*Voistvuiushchii vitalizm*, Vologda, 1926). Lepeshinskaia charged the followers of twentieth century vitalism with "talmudism," "antediluvian philosophical views," idealism, and obscurantism (Soifert, pp. 276, 277, 281). The philosophical foundations of vitalism were criticized for the last time in 1930 by J. Agol in *Vitalizm, mekhanicheskii materializm i marksizm* (Moscow, 1930).

⁴⁰ I.R. Titunik, "Bakhtin and/or Voloshinov and/or Medvedev: Dialogue and/or Doubletalk?" in *Language and Literary Theory*, ed. by B. Stolz (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984), pp. 535-64; "The Bakhtin Problem....," *Slavic and East European Journal* 30:1 (Spring 1986), pp. 92-5.

⁴¹ Nina Perlina, "Bakhtin-Medvedev-Voloshinov: An Apple of Discord," *University of Ottawa Quarterly* 53:1 (January-March 1983), pp. 35-47.

sor Titunik has sufficient reason to repeat his reservations about the insufficient textological analysis provided by Clark and Holquist in their book.

However, rather than charging Clark and Holquist with a "disregard for facts," (as Titunik does)⁴² one can more effectively reproach them with an unwarranted discrimination among the sources that their Soviet colleagues made available to them for their work on Bakhtin. Clark and Holquist generously used these sources without, perhaps, enough reservations regarding the factual validity of all the material--whether it be documentary evidence or legends. The origin and substance of the legend of Bakhtin's presence in all the works of his friends are well known. The legend was created in the Soviet Union and one can easily provide a list of the people who constructed it. One serious motivation for creating the Soviet Bakhtin myth was surely a legitimate plea for the acceptance of contemporary Russian theories of philosophical aesthetics, culturology, and anthropology on par with certain movements in the humanities in the West. For tactical reasons, in order to gain access to an international intellectual forum, Soviet scholars camouflaged the subject of their plea. They used Bakhtin's name as a synecdoche for plurivocality in the human sciences. This *quid pro quo* was a clever device, because by means of this tactic they were able to preserve the supreme rights of official ideology. Bakhtin alone was proclaimed a great thinker, and his challenging concepts were compared to several ideational complexes in Western culture. The mainstay of Soviet ideology--the theory of reflection--still remained an indisputable authority, fundamentally at odds with the pluralism of Western ideologies.

⁴² I.R. Titunik, "The Bakhtin Problem," p. 95.

As much as any mythological concept, the legend of Bakhtin is an ambiguous phenomenon: its images and ideas are both real and fantastic, liberating and binding, true and false. For those predisposed to amplify the "liberating" effect of the legend, a chronological bibliography of books by and on Bakhtin and six other participants of his Circle is sufficient evidence of its practical effectiveness. If not for the legendary authority of Bakhtin, posthumous publications of works by Kagan and Pumpianskii would hardly have been possible.

But the misleading effect of the myth should also not be ignored. Is it true, for example, that in 1926-30 Bakhtin had "conjured" as many texts as are ascribed to him in the legend? Most likely not, although the texts under discussion clearly reveal a certain ideational resemblance. Although Bakhtin's singlehanded authorship of the disputed texts is overestimated, is it still possible to find new material evidence of his disguised authorship? The answer is certainly yes. Anyone who wants to play the role of devil's advocate can take a text and "prove" Bakhtin's authorship. An introductory chapter, "Sovremennoe sostoianie teorii khudozhestvennogo tvorchestva," from Pavel Medvedev's book, *V laboratorii pisatel'ia* (Leningrad 1933) would do as an example.⁴³ I invite the participants of the Forum to examine the following hypothetical "textual explication" of this chapter.

Topical Analysis: The title of the chapter is common to those of Bakhtin's works written under a disguised name (cf. "Novye techeniia lingvisticheckoi mysli na zapade" by Voloshinov). The content--a succinct survey unifying several "individual voices" into one effort to resolve a still poorly studied and open-ended problem--is very typical of Bakhtin.

⁴³ P. Medvedev, *V laboratorii pisatel'ia*, pp. 7-28.

Historical inquiry and chronological attribution: In the mid-1920s, Bakhtin (who was so negligent with his manuscripts!) wrote this article for a journal, which, of course, did not accept it. Then Medvedev requested the manuscript from the editor in order to return it to Bakhtin. Since the latter never bothered about the article, it remained in Medvedev's possession. Several years after Bakhtin's arrest in 1933, it was published as part of Medvedev's book (colorful details can be added if desired).

Textual analysis: The passage exhibits such typical hallmarks of Bakhtin's style and personality as a combined interest in philosophical aesthetics, and the social and natural sciences (psychology, reflexology). The theories of Bergson, Lapshin, and William James are compared to those of Bekhterev and Freud (a detailed discussion of "Bakhtin/Medvedev between Bekhterev and Freud" can be included if needed).

It is clear that such textual analysis is not and *will never be sufficient for proving individual authorship* because, rather than detecting individual characteristics of the author's style, it can only underscore typological and structural similarities among several intellectual concepts elaborated in the collective effort of an academic school, now known as the Bakhtin Circle. An analysis of structural models would, however, help trace the genesis and *authoring* of individual ideas, their further development into collective views and their evolution into cultural concepts of the era. Textual analysis of the most variegated documentary sources available from an epoch would inevitably amplify the multitude of individual voices in culture and accentuate the pertinent intellectual leitmotifs of the time.

Trying to ascribe a chapter of Medvedev to Bakhtin is a polemical exercise we need not pursue. Yet the attempt to discuss Medvedev's book as a

critical revival of intuitivist aesthetics and a study of the dialogical relationship between the personality of the writer and the persona of the author does deserve serious attention. In all probability, an objective discussion of this sort would actually strengthen the validity of those ideas authored by Bakhtin himself. This presumption finds support in Lidiia Ginzburg, who writes:

Ostensibly Bakhtin was a polyphonic, a 'dialogical' person. He, in particular, published two books under the names of other people. Z.G., who frequently met Bakhtin in Maleevka, asked him directly, ... why did he publish his works under other people's names? Bakhtin said that those were his friends whom he liked, so why should he not write the books under their names? Why not? B[ocharov], the executor of Bakhtin's will, believes that this is a complicated case, and that it would not be proper merely to substitute the name of Bakhtin for those of Voloshinov and Medvedev in future editions, because 'the books are written in a different manner.' They are written by a polyphonic person.⁴⁴

The contemplative tone of Ginzburg's "Notes" implies that she cannot suggest any definitive editorial strategy in this vexing case. The existing palliative--preserving the names of Medvedev and Voloshinov on the book covers and attributing the text to Bakhtin in the editorial prefaces--brings to one's mind a mythic image of Push me-Pull me, and thus contributes to the obfuscating power of the Bakhtin legend.

Ironically, even unequivocal statements provide no help through the labyrinth of the Bakhtin legend. The following example will prove the point. In 1930, Voloshinov, who worked for N. Marr's Iaphetic Institute in Leningrad, joined the Linguistic Sector of this institution. Ol'ga Freidenberg, an expert on ancient folklore, a first cousin of Boris Pasternak, and a person of

⁴⁴ Lidiia Ginzburg, *Literatura v poiskakh real'nosti* (Leningrad: Sovremennaia pisatel', 1987), pp. 332-33.

strong moral conviction, worked for the Mythology Sector. In her retrospective diary (late 1940s-54, unpublished), Freidenberg describes Voloshinov as "an elegant young man and an esthete, an author of a linguistic book written for him by Blokhin [sic]." This Voloshinov, continues Freidenberg, had offered her a deal: she would write a book for him, and he would promote her writings and get them into print. Freidenberg "rejected the offer," and their "relations became ice-cold."⁴⁵ Freidenberg's wrong spelling of the name ("Blokhin") indicates that in the 1940s and 1950s, when she wrote the diary, she did not know about Voloshinov's acquaintance with Bakhtin and did not associate the true author of "a linguistic book" with the person who wrote *Problems of Dostoevsky's Creative Work*.

Funny things are happening on the way to the Bakhtin Forum. Material evidence proves the power of abstract ideas (the nature of intellectual culture, the plurivocality of ideational contexts). Bakhtin's "manuscripts do not burn," even if his writings do "go up in smoke." Bakhtin's dialogical discourse stands its ground, for every publication of his unknown fragments breaks the unsurmountable limits of the text and brings to life new participants. Even textual criticism, which in its terminological definition is a literary discipline that establishes the authorship and authenticity of the work, reveals, in Bakhtin's case, a plethora of additional individual intonations, professional idiolects, and academic pronouncements. "Getting down to the text itself," in true Bakhtinian spirit, makes the question of voice not simpler, but more complex. The academic community has more to gain than to

⁴⁵ Ol'ga Freideberg's diary is held by the Pasternak Trust, Oxford. For the quoted passage, see: Folder 4, book 7, ch. 54, p. 226. I am grateful to Professor Ann Pasternak Slater for making this valuable material available to me.

lose by discerning in the writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev, and Voloshinov like-minded, yet individual, scholars.