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The Janus-Face of Language: Reification in the Work of Habermas and the Bakhtin Circle

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Abstract

The distinction between reified and non-reified forms of communication animates both Habermas' and the Bakhtin Circle's projects. Habermas situates reaching understanding as a diagnostic of reification, while Bakhtin's counter-claim places hybridization as a diagnostic of reification and as a model of linguistic change. The violation of Kantian moral law: the treating of individuals as means and not as ends in themselves, is the crux of Habermas' reformulation of reification inasmuch as it also lays the ground for his reconstructive efforts in formal pragmatics. This effort establishes the ground from which a theory of meaning linking language-use and validity may be elaborated as part of a broader project in discourse ethics. So oriented this formal pragmatic theory of speech acts eschews semiotics in favour of semantics and the sentence as its point of departure. While the Bakhtin Circle's empirical pragmatic project takes this form of abstraction as the target of its polemic, the limits of Habermas' reconstruction can be seen in light of its identity thinking (to borrow from Adorno) and a theory of meaning that remains closed off to its foundations in exchange relations. In this context my primary purpose is to argue that if Hagerman' semantic formulations bolster his claims on behalf of reaching understanding, they also remain mired in reifications that are exposed by semiotic projects in Bakhtin and Volosinov.

Introduction

Although their respective philosophies of language are oriented to the separate validity spheres of ethics and aesthetics elaborated in Kant, Habermas and Bakhtin develop distinct articulations of the reifications that arise with capitalist rationalization. Even so both have contentious relationships to Marxism. This is evident in Habermas' reconstruction of historical materialism where he expressly rejects Marxist categories in favour of the turn to communicative action. Bakhtin's relationship to Marxism is less explicitly articulated and arguably more ambivalent, particularly if Volosinov is granted authorship of *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*.[1] Unique historical circumstances situate both projects, and while each addresses the problem of reification in their respective projects, they differ on how to identify its effects in language. Habermas situates reaching understanding as a diagnostic of

reification, while Bakhtin's counter-claim places hybridization as a diagnostic of reification and as a model of linguistic change. These projects are under-pinned by respective pragmatic theories of speech acts and utterances that are relevant to thinking through the present historical moment.

The work of Habermas and Bakhtin remain the subject of separate academic receptions in sociology, literature, and cultural studies that more recent work has sought to bring together. There are scattered references in the literature that suggest links between the two thinkers, but the most sustained efforts to work through a critical engagement between the pair are taken up in the work of Nielsen (1995, 2002), Hirschkop (1999), Crowley (1989, 1996) and Ives (2004). Nielsen (1995) explores the young Bakhtin's interest in answerability, ethics and aesthetics in an effort to link it to Habermas' reinvigoration of a neo-Kantian model of discourse ethics. In his later work, Nielsen (2002) initiates a dialogue between the pair in order to establish the grounds of a transcultural theory of social action. Hirschkop (1999) is primarily interested in analyzing the implications of Bakhtin's theorization of the dialogue and dialogism for democratic forms of speech communication. Toward this end he takes up some of the key differences that distinguish Bakhtin's formulations from Habermas' deliberative model of democratic communication. Crowley (1996) takes a different tack by drawing upon Bakhtin's philosophy of language to emphasize the exclusions that structure Habermas' early account of the bourgeois public sphere. In particular, Crowley notes that the 'emergence' of the public sphere was not as seamless as Habermas suggests, and that his account also absents the centralizing force of Standard English practices in establishing the new class society and bourgeois hegemony. Ives (2004) works through the implications of the linguistic theories of both the Bakhtin Circle and the Frankfurt School for Gramsci's linguistics. In particular Ives' project seeks to develop Gramsci's conception of a progressive hegemony as part of a unified national language that can avoid the pitfalls associated with the monological in Bakhtin's analysis. Ives suggests that the issue of unity in a national language separates Gramsci and the Bakhtin Circle, although the Rabelais book is an exception to the otherwise sustained critique the Circle makes against unification. This analysis is joined to a critique of Habermas that rests on the validity basis of formal pragmatics and the absence of conflictual social relations in processes of reaching understanding and agreement.

As we shall see Habermas' move to a communication paradigm re-conceives reification in non-Marxist, but wholly Kantian terms, although the driving force behind this move is the radical critique Weber, Adorno and Horkheimer launch against instrumental rationality. As a result, Habermas' reconstruction of historical materialism and the abandonment of key

Marxist categories, base/superstructure, ideology critique and the theory of value produces its own reifications in the theory of communicative action and formal pragmatics. This has significant implications for evaluating Habermas' project, some of which are brought into high relief by this mediation with the Bakhtin Circle's thought. If modernity is evaluated as Janus-faced by both, they argue that its consequences, the universal presuppositions embedded in reaching understanding for Habermas, and the social stratifications embedded in heteroglossia for Bakhtin, requires coming to terms with the problem of reification. The distinction between reified and non-reified forms of communication animates both Habermas' and the Bakhtin Circle's projects. I argue that Habermas' rejection of Marxist categories, upon which the theory of communicative action is founded and that is even more evident in formal pragmatics, results in a conception of language where the struggle over meaning is evacuated under the requisite of reaching understanding and agreement. In the theory of communicative action, reaching understanding grounds a rational reconstructive project capable of standing in as an *idealized* counter-factual that can diagnose reifications in speech interactions. This project is aided by Habermas' deployment of semantics over semiotics and by a theory of meaning that configures speech acts in terms of their propositional and illocutionary force.

If Habermas' reconstructive project is informed by the volk's turn to fascism, Bakhtin's early writings emerge in the context of the revolution of 1917, while his later work develops under Stalin's thwarting of its revolutionary energies. Bakhtin's relationship to Marxism is contentious and his work has been subject to appropriation by both liberal pluralists and Marxists alike.[2] The 'struggle over Bakhtin' is also situated within debates over authorship as well as debates among political factions within the academy. These issues are further mediated by Bakhtin's early pre-occupations with Kantian themes of answerability that Tihanov (1998, 2000) argues remain a palimpsest in his later work.[3] Bakhtin's mature project takes on more polemical tones as he moves to theorize questions of language through the novel form in particular and the spheres of aesthetics and literature in general. The critique of Enlightenment rationality is scattered throughout his work as are his consistent efforts to link reification to abstract objectivist theories of language. However Bakhtin's critique of capitalist rationalization is most expressly articulated in his analysis of Dostoevsky where he claims that the author's orchestration of polyphony indicates the basic structure of modern forms of consciousness in opposition to the solitary and isolated consciousness *created* by capitalism.

In Bakhtin's account, social and literary heteroglossia are the specific consequence of a modern de-centred consciousness that evolves through a process of hybridization or the

mutual inter-orientation (and translation) of two or more languages. Hybridization becomes a central motif in Bakhtin's analysis of discourses in the novel and everyday speech life because it serves as a model of linguistic change and as a means of diagnosing reification. Bakhtin's argument places reported speech at the centre of both empirical pragmatic and historical poetic projects in which language speech or its representation in novels that incorporate heteroglossia is double-voiced, a refraction of others' speech that suggests the hybridity of all linguistic forms. In Bakhtin's analysis of Rabelais, and in Volosinov's (1973: 23) critique of Saussure, this aspect of language use is theorized as the Janus face (two-faced character) of 'every living sign'. Bakhtin also details the stylistic devices of the 'gay deception', stupidity and non-understanding in Rabelais' novels. Embodied in the figures of the rogue, the fool and the clown, these devices act as polemical failures to understand official claims to truth.

Bakhtin's elaboration of the 'gay deception' suggests an affinity with Umberto Eco's (1979: 7) claim that a theory of the lie could provide the basis for a general semiotics. In this context my primary purpose is to argue that if Habermas' semantic formulations bolster his claims on behalf of reaching understanding, they also remain mired in reifications that are exposed by semiotic projects in Bakhtin and Volosinov. The lie figures in this analysis particularly as Habermas requires speech participants to not only assume identical meanings in their discussion of norms, but to also assume performative attitudes of sincerity and truthfulness. While these idealized counterfactuals stand in as a diagnostic for reifications in language, this reconstructive project represents for Bakhtin and Volosinov the kind of semantic closures symptomatic of a fully reified discourse. If Habermas excludes the aesthetic on the grounds that it is not amenable to rational reconstruction and Bakhtin acknowledges that ethical and aesthetic discourses constitute antinomies, both insist that the mutual interplay and mediation of the cultural value spheres identified by Kant work as an antidote to reification. For Habermas, communicative action is the medium of this form of exchange and is capable of standing in as a diagnostic for reification, while for Bakhtin, the novel is the genre and medium by which a literary heteroglossia can represent the unfinalizability of even a fully reified language.

The Theory of Communicative Action

Habermas' move to the theory of communicative action, like his early work on the bourgeois public sphere, takes its departure point from the radical critiques of Enlightenment reason and societal rationalization launched by Weber, Adorno and Horkheimer. So oriented, Habermas attempts to restore the normative foundations of critical theory through a

rehabilitation of a form of reason that can oppose the legacy of reifications left in the wake of capitalist rationalization. Yet Habermas' turn to a communication paradigm and to a formal pragmatic theory of meaning rests on a reconstruction of historical materialism that leaves behind Marxist categories in favour of a conception of reification that represents a re-invigoration of Kantian ethics in intersubjective terms. In this instance, Habermas identifies reification not in the effects of the universalization of the commodity form and exchange value, but in instrumental and strategic forms of rationality that treat human beings as means to an end. As a result, this reformulation of reification owes more to Kant than to Marx or Lukács leaving the theory of communicative action and formal pragmatics open to charges of their own reifications. While the Bakhtin Circle take the system of equivalences and semantic closures embedded in discourses like Habermas' as symptomatic of reification, this critique is grounded in the case the Circle make for the social fact of heteroglossia.

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer reject the rational claims of all critical-theoretical endeavours in an indictment that fuels Adorno's turn to determinate negation. Both Adorno and Horkheimer extend their argument to language itself, charged with fulfilling purely affirmative functions. In this formulation, capitalist exchange values and bourgeois rules of equivalence liquidate negation from language so that it "could no longer voice protest" (Jay 1973: 261-263). In his turn to negative dialectics, Adorno (1973: 148) argues that the identitarian logic of bourgeois exchange values constitute "the primal form of ideology". As a result, language and thought are irreparably severed from an emancipatory critical project. With the diagnosis that reason itself can suggest no link with praxis, all thought becomes condemned to the equivalences of capitalist exchange values (Jay 1973: 256). In this characterization, language functions as a form of identity thinking that thwarts historical development in service of the status quo.

While exchange relations implied the abstract equality of the bourgeois, this abstraction also allowed the conflation between *bourgeois* and *homme* as such. Kant's model spheres, whether in the far reaches of theoretical investigations, or the domains of practical knowledge and ethics, or the realms of aesthetic taste in general, were in fact a very narrow enclave built on the presumptions of privatized spheres of production and consumption. Enlightenment was posited as a matter for scholars whose orientation to the published word and an ever wider, if undisclosed public, could be said to assure the steady, safe progress of knowledge. With the revolutionary terror of the continent still fresh in his imaginary, Kant's model reserved the making of history and culture for those in the upper stratum.

Historically the public sphere arises in medieval societies from the need of the feudal ruling class "to repeatedly imprint its authority, to assist in the internalization of terror..." (Negt and Kluge 1993: 73). But in their critique of Habermas as the principal heir of Kant's model, Negt and Kluge (1993: 10) argue that the bourgeois public sphere inoculates its institutions against critique by representing social relations as "the opposite of actual relations in the economic struggle." Taking aim at Kant, they (Negt and Kluge 1993: 10) write:

> The pathos with which Kant stresses the moral code, the abstract character of civil laws, the rigid imperative of all rules that determine human conduct, is a reflex of the fact that bourgeois commodity production is in the process of development. The inner violence of these principles, including the principle of the public sphere, is rooted in the fact that the main struggle must be waged against all particularities...In this way, Kant excludes from politics and the public sphere all those sections of the population that do not participate in bourgeois politics because they cannot afford to.

Initially Habermas argues that the theory of reification requires reformulation under the historical conditions of a welfare-state compromise and pacification of the sphere of social labour. As a result of this diagnosis, Habermas attempts to uncouple Lukács' formulation of reification from within the philosophy of consciousness to an intersubjective model of reaching understanding within the broader claims of his theory of communicative action. For Lukács (1971: 131), the universalization of the commodity form results in wholly reified forms of interaction and increasingly objectified social relationships even as the proletariat emerges as the collective subject of history. While Marx analyses how the abstraction of concrete labour makes it into a commodity subject to exchange relations, the fantastic character of the commodity form means that a relationship between social beings is concealed as a relationship between things. In this way, Marx's critique of commodity fetishism implies that capitalism maintains itself through a deception and an inversion of actual social relationships. Although Habermas suggests that Marx's analysis of the commodity form remains the *coup de main* of his theory, he concludes that under the conditions of a welfare state compromise the theory of communicative action no longer requires the theory of value for its explanatory force. As a result Habermas argues that the theory of late-capitalist reification (now reformulated in opposition to forms of reaching understanding) has to be supplemented with a theory of cultural modernity to which the theory of communicative action and a formal pragmatic analysis of speech acts are explicitly oriented.

Habermas' theory of communicative action draws its initial impulse from the early Marx and Engels' in *The German Ideology* where they highlight the double relationship between instrumental action and forms of social cooperation in the mode of species reproduction. In that case Habermas argues that Marx and Engels suggest that the reproduction of species life involves a double relationship, but that they emphasize production relations over social cooperation in their early articulation of a materialist conception of history. That premise firmly in place, Habermas introduces the primary thesis behind his theory of communicative action.

> If we assume that the human species maintains itself through the socially coordinated activities of its members and that this coordination is established through communication -- and in certain spheres of life, through communication aimed at reaching agreement -- then the reproduction of the species also requires satisfying conditions of a rationality inherent in communicative action (Habermas 1984: 397).

In Habermas' reading, the concept of alienation in Marx's analysis of capitalist production is superseded by his characterization of the sphere of social labour in terms of its reification. Yet he (Habermas 1987: 341) neglects to point out that Marx moves away from the concept of alienation to that of exploitation as the defining feature of the social relationship between the capitalist and wage labourer. Habermas (1987: 340) agrees with Marx on the primacy of an economic base, but he argues that the theory of value is limited by allowing "for only *one* channel through which the monetarization of labor power expropriates from producers work activities abstracted into work performances", even as economic processes depend on being 'functionally supplemented' by an administrative system steered by the medium of power. Habermas (1987: 340) suggests that Marx is "unable to distinguish in this repressive uprooting of traditional forms of life (during the transition between feudalism and capitalism) between the aspect of *reification* and that of *structural differentiation* of the lifeworld." So characterized, the 'monistic' aspect of the theory of value cannot distinguish the rationalization of the lifeworld from the effects of its reification. With that diagnosis in place, Habermas proceeds to lay the normative foundations for the turn to a theory of communicative action.

The theory of communicative action reformulates practical reason as a procedural (non-substantive) model of intersubjective speech interaction. In this model, purposive-rational forms of action are confined to the sphere of production that is reformulated in terms of the systems of money and power. Habermas' turn to the lifeworld and communicative action as a foundation for rational reconstruction also redirects the philosophy of consciousness he

attributes to both Marx and Lukács. Callinicos (1989: 97) argues that this results in a shift from a subject that represents objects and works with them to a dialogic subject oriented to intersubjective contexts of communication. Callinicos is critical of Habermas' separation of labour and interaction arguing that a social conception of language is embedded in Marx's *Manuscripts* and *The German Ideology*, although he suggests that it is the Bakhtin Circle who have developed more systematic efforts to base a philosophy of language on the dialogic character of speech interaction. If Habermas opposes labour and interaction as part of laying the foundation for communicative action, this move away from labour and a production model to a non-Marxist paradigm has two critical results. On the one hand, Habermas' reformulation of Lukács' analysis of reification outside of a production model and Marxist categories means that a reified lifeworld is diagnosed as pathological and subject to inner colonization by the subsystems of money and power. On the other hand, a non-reified form of understanding, opposed to the instrumental actions characteristic of the sphere of production, finds its critical purchase in lifeworld contexts of communicative action oriented to reaching understanding. This becomes the basic claim of Habermas' reformulation of reification, but it also means that he leaves behind the theoretical accomplishments of Marx's analysis of the commodity form and the theory of value, as well as their implications for his own theory of communicative action and formal pragmatics. This has important consequences for how Habermas' project is evaluated.

Horowitz (1998) argues that Habermas' move to a non-Marxist theory of reification works not only to intervene in the philosophy of history embedded in Weberian and Frankfurt traditions, but also as the basis of further distinctions between colonization and mediatization, a rationalized lifeworld and system rationalization, and between de-centred and pathological forms of modern consciousness. Reification is reformulated in terms of the lifeworld's colonization, yet this diagnosis may be said to rest on a 'non-dialectical' assumption that the lifeworld/system relation can be reduced to an "almost complementary co-determination" of two different principles, one mediated by speech, and the other by a norm-free form of coordinating action (Horowitz 1998: 17). This has reassuring and even 'harmonizing' implications in which "Markets and bureaucratic forms of domination are to be worried over, but they do not need to be fundamentally transformed" (Horowitz 1998: 7). If Habermas acknowledges that conflicts over issues of distribution have to be negotiated outside this model, Mouffe (2000: 93) contends that his consensus model of discourse fixes meaning in the interests of liberal democratic values. As a result, Habermas' admission undermines the democratic and universalistic claims made on behalf of his project. Callinicos (1989: 115) charges that Habermas "effectively writes the relations of production out of the picture" by subordinating them to "the consensual structures of social integration." This, needless to

say, amounts to a non-Marxist account of social change in which "forms of social integration, rather than the interaction of technological development and class struggle become the pacemakers of social evolution" (Callinicos 1989: 120).

In Habermas' formulation action oriented to reaching understanding not only provides the inner unity of modern forms of argumentation, but is also posited as the primary function of communication. Thus established, the effort to reconstruct the formal validity conditions of speech acts becomes an investigation into the formal conditions of reaching understanding upon which all other forms of communication are deemed *parasitic.* In order to accomplish this task however, "the theory of communicative action must accomplish materialistically what Kant failed to do transcendentally" (Horowitz 1998: 17). To this end, Horowitz argues that Habermas substitutes the universal presuppositions of speech acts (reaching understanding as the telos of speech) for Kant's claim for the transcendental unity of apperception. In this way, the theory of communicative action sets up a binary relation between its logic of 'reaching understanding' (*Verstandigung*) and the reifications attendant upon capitalist rationalization.

The distinction Habermas makes between reified and rationalized worldviews thus comes to rest on the idealizing and counter-factual presumptions of a communication oriented to mutual understanding and the presupposition of an everyday practice colonized not by exchange relations and the commodity form, but by de-linguistified subsystems of money and power. This results in a reification of social relations in which the "relation of self to other and of self to self are distorted by a prejudice in favour of their apperception as things...as open to instrumentalities" (Habermas 1998: 10). This violation of Kantian moral law: the treating of individuals as means and not as ends in themselves, is the crux of Habermas' reformulation of reification inasmuch as it also lays the ground for his reconstructive efforts in formal pragmatics. While those theoretical interventions are oriented to a model of consensual speech interaction that comes under attack on that very basis, Habermas responds to his critics by insisting "[c]ommunicative reason operates in history as an avenging force" (1982: 227). As we shall see, Bakhtin makes a rather different claim, but first we turn to an analysis of his account of heteroglossia where hybridization is theorized as a means for diagnosing reification and as a model of linguistic change.

Heteroglossia

In contrast to Habermas' move away from ideology critique, by the mid to late 1920s, Bakhtin and Volosinov had begun to publish separate, but related analyses of discourse, linguistics and semiotics. Early on Bakhtin had engaged Kantian ethics and aesthetics, but

his typology of discourses pushed ahead in more polemical directions in the Dostoevsky book and beyond (Crowley 1989: 70). There his analysis turned to elaborate a critique of reification that linked it to monological worldviews and the claims of a unified (national) language. The Bakhtin Circle's analysis is rooted in their critique of abstract objectivist theories of utterances as single-voiced and semantically fixed. In this critique, meaning is always (over) determined in the interests of and at the imposition of a specific social group when for Bakhtin and Volosinov language and utterances are always embedded in value distinctions that point to the social relationships of speakers in dialogue. In contrast, monological discourses anticipate no response; they treat the other as an object, a thing in itself. Gardiner (1992: 91-92) appreciates the affinity with Adorno when he suggests that in Bakhtin, the "crux of ideological phenomena in the negative sense" is constituted by monological attempts "to fix meaning and univocalize the sign." In contrast to the hybridity of heteroglossia, monological discourses are always a symptom of reification.

Tihanov (2000) argues that Bakhtin's formulation of reification emerges in relation to his ideas on dialogue. In Bakhtin's formulation, dialogue sublates reification. Tihanov (2000: 79-80) continues:

> Sublate is used here as the standard translation of the German *aufheben* to denote the overlapping of inheriting, preserving, and negating the reified. Lukács insists that reification is evidence of an illness which can be cured only through revolution; for Bakhtin reification already bears within itself the symptoms of recovery. Reification, Bakhtin believes will be overwhelmed by its own offspring – heteroglossia – and the ensuing dialogue of worldviews.

Hirschkop (1999: 14) makes a related claim when he suggests that in Bakhtin, the novel is transformed into "both symptom and cure for the linguistic and cultural situation of modernity." For Pechey (1999: 366), Bakhtin's analysis echoes Adorno and Horkheimer for whom "the myth of reason is to be dissolved by unfolding the reason of myth." Yet for Tihanov (2000: 82), Bakhtin's project suggests that as the product of language, literature "appears capable of solving problems which do not originate in language." Although he doesn't take up the Circle's semiotic orientations to language and ideology, Tihanov addresses Volosinov's re-formulation of ideology outside of the perceived limitations of the base/superstructure model. Language is central to this effort because it works through all spheres of human activity. As a result, for Volosinov language is part of all ideological systems of thought and signification "without identifying with any one ideology in particular" (Tihanov 2000: 97). If non-identical with the art of literature, language is "replete with" with

ideological values that may be used to reflect or refract meaning (Tihanov 2000: 98). In this way, the novel stands in as a model of society and the languages that populate and are represented to full effect in novelistic discourses become the medium of Bakhtin's reformulation of reification.

Heteroglossia is broadly defined as the stratification of social, professional, generic, specialized, scientific, and literary discourses within a national language. Bakhtin insists that the appropriation and use of language by individual speakers who author utterances, and in some cases, novels, is always the product of a speaker or author's refraction of another's discourse and language. Bakhtin takes up some of these questions as the problem of reported speech in the history of the European novel, while for Volosinov, the phenomenon of reported speech is a sociological problem that must consider the contexts of both reported and authorial speech. This relationship takes particular forms in different historical and social moments, but three particular distinctions are relevant to Volosinov (1973). In the first instance, the relationship between authorial and reported speech can take an authoritarian, dogmatic and linear direction that is reified in monological discourses. Second, Volosinov (1973: 120) suggests reported speech can infiltrate language with "authorial retort and commentary in deft and subtle ways..." And finally, in such quasi-direct discourses, the reporting context can be said to break down the boundaries between authorial and reported speech. Such discourses are double-voiced: meaning is not fixed or unitary, but *relativized* by its conditions of production and its contexts of reception. Because reported speech can be said to be constitutive for the inner speech life of individuals, both Bakhtin and Volosinov claim that all speech has the character of reported speech, although its methods of demarcation vary historically and across genres. In this understanding, language is always hybrid and double-voiced because language is peopled with others' words. So the problem of reported speech - as speech about speech - has implications for the core claims of their reformulation of reification in terms of monological discourse types.

As we shall see, Bakhtin's historical poetic project analyzes the representation and assimilation of historical time in the lives of characters and plot action, but its central focus is the author's representation of a common language in terms of a monological worldview or in terms of a heteroglossia that is deemed a social fact. Monological worldviews consolidate in epic forms and are organized as a *linguistic* unity in direct contrast to the social stratifications that are represented in the stylistic unity of novels that incorporate heteroglossia. Deployed in an artistic unity, novels that incorporate heteroglossia are exemplary genres for representing the social stratifications in language and for fulfilling auto-critical functions. Bakhtin's critique is prefigured in his work on Dostoevsky where he argues that monological

discourses achieve new forms of canonization with capitalist modernization. In this instance, capitalism itself "created the conditions for a special type of inescapably solitary consciousness." Dostoevsky's triumph in the polyphonic novel "exposes the falsity of this consciousness, as it moves in a vicious circle" (Bakhtin 1984a: 288). While Bakhtin appreciates Dostoevsky for capturing the catastrophic effects of capitalism on the Russian peasantry, Rabelais' novels act as an artistic exemplar of social heteroglossia.

The prerequisite for the novel's representation of social heteroglossia is the internal stratification of language that comes about with a modern decentred understanding, but the novel represents a decentred worldview only if, as a genre it "combines subordinated yet still relatively autonomous discourses in a higher unity" (Bakhtin 1981: 262). Brandist (2000: 91) suggests that Bakhtin's analysis constitutes a "semiotics of hegemony" in which the artistic task of the novel is to represent the social heteroglossia of everyday character speech. The novel then is not only fundamentally non-canonical, but is furthermore oriented against the monological genres that Bakhtin links to authoritarian and reified discourses. Reified, inert, calcified, and semantically finite and fixed, a monological discourse is incapable of double voicing and of entering into a hybrid form; it becomes "a thing in its own right" (Bakhtin 1981: 343-347). Those reified types can become part of novelistic discourse, however, and subject to parodic inversions and ironic inflections as in the case of Rabelais.

Ives (2004) suggests that despite rather similar critiques of the linguistic sciences, the Bakhtin Circle and Gramsci part company on the issue of a unified national language. While this distinction has to do with their respective historical circumstances, and with the fact that Bakhtin is oriented to aesthetics as opposed to politics, Ives (2004: 72-74) suggests that Bakhtin doesn't problematize the question of unity or unification of a national language. This is true, but as Ives indicates, Bakhtin's antipathy to unified national languages is not evident in the Rabelais book where the role of folk vernaculars in the making of a national language is in fact subject to his distinct approval. I will return to these questions in the discussion of Bakhtin's historical poetics, but for my purposes here, it is important to stress that Bakhtin's preoccupation with the artistic unity created in novels that incorporate heteroglossia is set against his disparagement of the linguistic unity he discerns in novels of the epic line. In this sense, Rabelais' representation of the diverse social languages that make up a new national language is valorised because it serves as an antidote to the reifications embedded in official discourses.

Bakhtin (1981: 288) grounds the social fact of heteroglossia in the diversity and multiplicity of de-centred worldviews and the social languages of everyday life. However he takes pains to

distinguish social heteroglossia from its literary representation, particularly in the comedic novels. In an early formulation, Hirschkop (1990) suggests that heteroglossia is less a sociological fact and more the product of Bakhtin's own authorial speech plan. "What is presented in heteroglossia as the natural state of affairs, 'the social ideologeme fused with its own discourse, its own language' is, in fact, the aesthetic project of what Bakhtin dubs the 'novel'" (Hirschkop 1990: 70). Although Hirschkop argues that the confusion between social and literary heteroglossia is compounded by Bakhtin's inability to distinguish reified and non-reified linguistic forms, these distinctions occupy centre stage in the respective empirical pragmatic and historical poetics projects taken up by Volosinov and Bakhtin. Bakhtin's attention to the role double-voiced discourses play in social and literary hybridization is central in this analysis. For Bakhtin (1984a: 62-3), Dostoevsky's polyphonic novels detail "the struggle against a *reification* of man, of human relations, of all human values under the conditions of capitalism."

Common to all double-voiced discourse is the author's use of another's voice in the direction of her own particular tasks and aspirations. In active variations of double-voiced discourses, the other voice remains *outside*, from where it exerts a productive influence on the author's speech. Statements by the author in such discourses are directed at its referential object, and simultaneously constitute a 'polemical blow' at another's discourse. In hidden polemic, for example, another's words are not reproduced but refracted in the author's discourse. This double-voiced relationship is significant in that "[o]ne word acutely senses alongside it someone else's word speaking about the same object, and this awareness determines its structure" (Bakhtin 1984a: 196). This orientation to the same object and another's words in hidden polemic is similar to the 'intensely dialogic' relation of rejoinders in real dialogue. In some cases, words become double-voiced, a "micro-dialogue" in which dialogic relationships permeate every word "provoking in it a battle and interruption of one voice by another" (Bakhtin 1984a: 74). Internally persuasive discourses are semantically open, and may enter "into an intense interaction, a *struggle*..." with other internally persuasive discourses and new dialogical contexts. For Bakhtin (1981: 345-346), this type of discourse "is able to reveal even newer *ways to mean*."

The comedic novel makes the most of this characteristic of social heteroglossia. Through the use of parodic stylization, these novels represent specifically accentuated relationships to the 'going point-of-view'. This stylistic task is accomplished through the direct and reported speech of characters or through the author's incorporation of genres within the novel project as a whole. The representation of heteroglossia constitutes a special type of double-voiced discourse where authorial intentions are refracted through 'another's speech in another's

language.' Double voicing makes reference to the extra-linguistic conditions in which utterances are produced by pointing to the need "to speak indirectly, conditionally, in a refracted way" (Bakhtin 1981: 324). Another's words are refracted by authorial intentions so that they may be made to mean in new ways, but the novel's capacity to represent the 'image of a language' in the process of its own historical becoming is attributed to language's capacity for self-representation and auto-criticism. The self-reflexive and auto-critical aspect of language lies in its ability "to represent another language while still retaining the capacity to sound simultaneously both outside it and within it, to talk about it and at the same time to talk in it and with it..." (Bakhtin 1981: 358). For Bakhtin, this aspect of language-use, to represent and to serve as the object of representation even as language continues 'to speak to itself', shapes the artistic tasks of novelistic discourse to the extent that it makes it difficult to treat language or its speakers in a reified manner.

The double voicing of novelistic prose reveals reified modes of representation by pushing to the limit "the mutual non-understanding represented by people *who speak in different languages*" (Bakhtin 1981: 356). In eras where the struggle over language and meaning is explicit, the authorial device of re-accentuating meaning allows for double voicing. In fact, Bakhtin suggests that more often than not, new linguistic images are the product of re-accentuating and a process of translation "from one accentual register to another" as in the comic to the tragic or vice versa. Dickens' characters are a case in point, for as Bakhtin (1981: 421) notes, "the traditionally comic image of the miser helps to establish hegemony for the new image of the capitalist" and are raised to tragic proportions in the figure of Dombey. The double-voiced discourses that emerge from hybridization serve two critical functions: as a primary means of linguistic change and as a means for diagnosing reification. As a result, once language is no longer conceived as "a sacrosanct and solitary embodiment of meaning and truth", it becomes only one of many ways to *hypothesize* meaning (Bakhtin 1981: 370).

For Bakhtin the social fact of heteroglossia requires coming to terms with the problem of its reification. Novels that incorporate and represent heteroglossia from below assume a differentiated social whole. These novels translate, re-work and re-accentuate social languages and genres by bringing them into a higher artistic unity. The prose of the European novel then is "*born and shaped in the process of a free (that is, reformulating) translation of others works*" (Bakhtin 1981: 378). In novels of the second line, then -- including both Cervantes and Rabelais – "heteroglossia avenges itself for having been excluded [...] from the first" (Bakhtin 1981: 386). Thus oriented, Bakhtin's heteroglossia avenges itself in an arena where it must contend with the 'avenging force' of Habermas'

communicative action. As we shall see, the struggle continues at the level of their respective formal and empirical pragmatic theories of speech acts to which we now turn.

Formal Pragmatics

In his turn to formal pragmatics, Habermas' model of speech interaction becomes subject to a rational reconstruction of the conditions of reaching understanding. This effort establishes the ground from which a theory of meaning linking language-use and validity may be elaborated as part of a broader project in discourse ethics. So oriented this formal pragmatic theory of speech acts eschews semiotics in favour of semantics and the sentence as its point of departure. While the Bakhtin Circle's empirical pragmatic project takes this form of abstraction as the target of its polemic, the limits of Habermas' reconstruction can be seen in light of its identity thinking (to borrow from Adorno) and a theory of meaning that remains closed off to its foundations in exchange relations.

While Kant could conceive an internal monologue that engaged in perspective taking as part of developing the critical capacity to think for oneself, Habermas argues that the theory of communicative action develops an intersubjective model of self-reflection and autonomy. In this model, formal pragmatics is oriented to two central claims. First, formal pragmatics sets out to rationally reconstruct the conditions of possible understanding between participants in speech. Second, so oriented to the validity basis of speech, it also attempts a rational reconstruction of the 'double structure' of speech. In this analysis, both the propositional content and the illocutionary force of speech are the objects of rational reconstruction. The illocutionary mode "specifies which validity claim a speaker is raising with his utterance, how he is raising it, and for what" (Habermas: 1984: 278). While the illocutionary force of an utterance establishes the conditions of validation from which speakers take up yes or no positions in relation to each other's claims, propositional contents are evaluated in the contexts of those intersubjective relationships. Some key distinctions are relevant, as Habermas wants to uncouple instrumental and communicative modes of understanding, as well as the illocutionary bonds established by communicative or strategic action. To achieve the latter, Habermas returns to Austin's analysis of perlocutions in speech acts. In this formulation, instrumental action is oriented to assessing the utility and efficiency of its means-ends relation, while strategic action indicates an orientation to success that also includes choosing to influence in one way or another the positions of opponents in argumentation.

In the early essay on formal pragmatics, Habermas (1979) begins to outline the notion of reaching understanding by suggesting that it operates along a continuum of minimal or

maximal effects. Yet by the turn to communicative action, reaching understanding is considered a process of reaching agreement (*Einigung*) among speakers. The rational basis of communicative action rests on the validity claims that speakers raise in argumentation because those claims can be met with a request for redemption. Because those claims may be criticized by others and are only redeemed on the basis of reasons, processes of reaching understanding "aim at an agreement that meets the conditions of rationally motivated assent *(Zustimmung)* to the content of an utterance" (Habermas 1984: 287). Although Habermas (1984: 288) recognizes that the multiple and multifarious uses to which language is put make it a suspect model for reconstructing processes of reaching understanding, this is not the case "if it can be shown that the use of language with an orientation to reaching understanding is the *original mode* of language use, upon which indirect understanding and the instrumental use of language in general, are parasitic." As Callinicos (1989) asks, how can reaching understanding be the inherent telos of speech if we include the inequalities and asymmetries characteristic of relations of production? According to Callinicos (1989: 105), Habermas' model requires rationally motivated agreement because without it "the connection between understanding and rationality has been broken." While Callinicos commends Habermas for seeking a theory of rationality in intersubjective communicative structures, he considers the implementation of this project 'disastrous' in its orientation to validity claims as the basis of speech interaction and a process of understanding that entails agreement among speakers. Instead of reaching understanding and agreement as the inherent telos of speech, Callinicos (1989: 107) suggests that the agreement Habermas delineates is more properly understood as an agreement to a form of life that is the prerequisite of speech. Mouffe (2000) points out that this is essentially the argument that Wittgenstein makes, albeit in a different context. Mouffe (2000: 67-68) encapsulates Wittgenstein's argument by suggesting that while speakers may agree on the language used in any language game, their definitions of a situation or state of affairs may or may not be shared even if there is agreement on the forms of life they share in common.

Because illocutionary effects are embedded within contexts of interaction, Habermas acknowledges that what Austin considers perlocutionary effects may also arise. For example, although trivial perlocutionary effects are often produced as side effects unintended by speakers, more serious effects ensue when illocutions are embedded in contexts of strategic interactions. Perlocutionary effects result "whenever a speaker acts with an orientation to success and thereby instrumentalizes speech acts for purposes that are only contingently related to the meaning of what is said" (Habermas 1984: 289). Habermas contends that the distinction between illocutionary and propositional contents that

characterize the double structure of speech serve as analytical distinctions in a way not at all comparable in the case of perlocutions. Perlocutionary effects depend on their covert relation to the speech act and to other participants. Put another way, the ends sought by strategic actors must remain hidden to other participants and, it might be added, even to themselves. Perlocutionary effects can be achieved through speech acts only "if the latter are *incorporated as means* into actions oriented to success" (Habermas 1984: 292). In this way Habermas can conclude that language-use oriented to success represents the subsumption of speech acts to strategic action and the suspension of action oriented to reaching understanding. Strategic action comes to represent the attempt to adopt a 'one-world' relation to other participants; speakers acting strategically take an objectivating attitude to the world where others become a means to an end.

As we saw above, Habermas' essay on formal pragmatics positioned the individual as the bearer of meaning, albeit within the contexts of irreducibly intersubjective forms of communication oriented to reaching understanding. While this formulation posits communicative action above and beyond the historical life of individuals and social groups – as both trans-historical and as the foundation of species life – the normative content of communicative action requires its participants to commit to certain counter-factual, idealized pragmatic presuppositions in order to reach understanding. According to Schott (1988: 129), Kant's epistemological problem was how "individuals who are fundamentally atomistic, will arrive at identical results in their thoughts." This problematic is reproduced in Habermas' (1996: 4) model, as participants "must ascribe identical meanings to expressions..." Speakers who commit to processes of reaching understanding do so on the basis of a performative assumption that meaning is identical for different users of a common language and in the different contexts in which those uses are employed. Yet this plain speaking is mired in obfuscation. If, according to Habermas, the universal presuppositions of speech interaction cannot be avoided and if this entails that speakers must assume identical meanings in argumentation, then as Rasch (2000: 33) argues "[f]or all the deliberation in Habermas' deliberative democracy, we are left with a single voice [in which] the goal…is to have no one thinking differently than anyone else."

In delineating his formal pragmatic project, Habermas invokes the work of Kantian logician Charles Sanders (Santiago) Peirce, who along with Dewey and James, is credited with initiating a North American philosophical tradition in pragmatism (Habermas 1992: 88-112). While Habermas suggests that Peirce's work constitutes a pragmatic theory of truth within the context of a community of inquirers, this ad hoc appropriation is coupled with a characteristic evaluation and dismissal of the critical implications of Peirce's theory of

meaning, two of which I want to draw attention to below. Although Habermas acknowledges that the field of semantics has 'slaved away' over the problem of 'how sentence meanings and thoughts reflect events in the world and how they enter persons' minds', it has been unable to address how it is that meanings remain identical (Habermas 1996: 13; 15). Nonetheless if this problem remains irresolvable within semantics, Habermas (1996: 19) maintains that the "ideal character of semantic generality shapes communicative action inasmuch as participants couldn't even intend to reach an understanding about something in the world if they did not *presuppose* on the basis of a common (or translatable) language, that they conferred identical meanings on the expressions they employed." While semantics takes the sentence as its departure point, and like Habermas can configure all thought as propositional, Habermas' use of Peirce in this context is misplaced and misleading. For one, Peirce argues that all cognition is mediated through signs and sign activity, although he named his project pragmaticism to distinguish its cognitive approach from the psychologism he perceived in James (Peirce 1985). Secondly, in a later essay Habermas (1992: 57-87; 88-112) rejects Peirce's cognitive semiotic project for remaining within the model of a philosophy of consciousness and representation, as opposed to an intersubjectively mediated model of communication such as his own. In this diagnosis, the significance of Peirce's claim for the semiotic character of cognition is overlooked in favour of Habermas' claims for the propositional character of speech. Quite remarkably, Habermas also rejects Peirce's cognitive semiotics for *universalizing* the sign and sign activity as a road leading to an 'infinite regress' of interpretations. In an alternative reading, Augusto Ponzio argues that Peirce's semiotics depart from the abstractions in Saussure's model in ways that point to an affinity with the Bakhtin Circle. This analysis is equally revealing for the semantic formulations in Habermas' formal pragmatic project.

Across the vast historical circumstances that separate Peirce and Bakhtin, Ponzio argues that they share a pragmatic orientation to the sign. Both thinkers take Saussure's conception of the sign as their departure point, yet Ponzio argues that each develops respective theories of the sign in opposition to the abstractions and equivalences in Saussure's model. Ponzio argues that the inner dialectical quality of the sign in Peirce and Bakhtin is opposed its static conception in Saussure. According to Ponzio, Saussure's linguistics finds its historical genealogy in capitalist exchange relations. He (Ponzio 1984: 273-4) elaborates:

> The static nature of the sign, rather, is due to its being based on equal exchange between the signifying form and the signified content ideated according to the model of economic exchange in our own society...In other words, the sender exchanges a *signifiant* for a *signifie* offered to him by the receiver in the same way that a ten dollar

bill may be exchanged for two five dollar bills, or a certain number of working hours is exchanged for a certain wage. It is not incidental that the Saussurian model of the sign (which gives expression to this egalitarian vision of perfect correspondence established with reference to a system as it appears in a state of equilibrium) should be constructed on the basis of the model of value in the economic sciences.

So while Ponzio argues that exchange value is the model upon which the equivalences of Saussurian linguistics is based, arguably for Bakhtin and Volosinov, if not for Habermas, this results in a system of language in which meaning is fixed as equivalent and identical. Following Ponzio's reasoning, Volosinov and Bakhtin's argument against abstract objectivism may be said to rest on its expropriation of value. In this analysis, the surplus of meaning inherent in heteroglossia is expropriated even as its remainder is over-determined in the interests of specific social groups. How might Habermas respond if Ponzio's critique were levelled at his own theory of communicative action? Habermas' rejection of Marx's theory of value rests on the diagnosis that it cannot account for the lifeworld's rationalization, however, with that judgement the theory of value drops altogether out of sight in his project. As a result, Habermas is able to sidestep the implications of this critique for the theory of communicative action and formal pragmatics. Ultimately then the diagnosis of the monistic character of the theory of value in Habermas' project forecloses a critique of its effects in language in general and the theory of communicative action and formal pragmatics in particular. This problem is further compounded by a turn to a semantic theory of meaning that suffers from its own reifications.

Habermas' rejection of semiotics also allows him to avoid the implications of signification that Peirce and the Bakhtin Circle take up in their respective semiotic projects. If language is understood in Saussure's terms as an arbitrary relationship between a signifier and a signified, then meaning can be reproduced or transformed by its users. While this formulation situates language on the terrain of ideological struggle for the likes of Volosinov and Bakhtin, formal pragmatics closes off this avenue by endorsing a form and practice of identity thinking. For Bakhtin and Volosinov, this type of a project represents the coercion at the core of a fully reified discourse. Moreover, the Bakhtin Circle's semiotic project undercuts the semantic orientation of formal pragmatics by placing the production of meaning and value at the centre of their metalinguistic and historical poetic projects. Bakhtin's project, which is joined to an analysis of the stylistic devices of the gay deception and non-understanding in the Rabelais book, finds its target in both Kant and his principal heir in Habermas. This endeavour provides an alternative means out of the reifications Habermas wishes to avoid but that arguably remain ineluctable in his formal pragmatic project.

Metalinguistics & Historical Poetics

The theoretical projects of metalinguistics and historical poetics emerge from the new directions initiated by Bakhtin and his colleagues, Volosinov and Medvedev and their critique of the dominant trends of the linguistic sciences and Saussure in particular. Bakhtin (1986 134-135) identifies his interest in the study of utterances as a new science of ideology that "requires a special methodology and, it should be said outright, a special science (scientific discipline)." Toward this end a metalinguistic analysis is directly oriented to uncovering the social, ideological and historical conditions and relationships that shape speech communication in everyday life, while historical poetics is organized around the analysis of the literary representation of the relationship between colloquial and official speech genres in its analysis of heteroglossia in the novel.

The metalinguistic questions of who speaks and under what conditions foreground the social relationships and contexts in which speech communication is embedded and the uses to which utterances are put in everyday life. As an empirical pragmatic project, metalinguistics suggests that everyday speech genres emerge in concrete spheres of human activity and are as necessary for mutual understanding as the correct and grammatical use of linguistic forms. Bakhtin distinguishes primary speech genres as those engaged in the transmission of practical information in everyday life from secondary speech genres that incorporate and deploy the reported speech of others via artistic, literary, or scientific genres and discourses. Genres are particularly significant in this analysis because they act as "drive belts from the history of society to the history of language" (Bakhtin 1986: 65). Bakhtin's later reformulation, from a sociological to an historical poetic project takes up the relationship between primary and secondary genres in his analysis of world literature. In so doing, this historical poetic project rewrites the history of canonical forms of knowledge much as it positions the novel as the genre most suited to the representation of the heteroglossia characteristic of everyday speech. This project is itself organized by the very presuppositions and premises at the core of the Bakhtin Circle's metalinguistic project.

Against the abstractions of Saussurean objectivism in particular, Volosinov argues that language is always constituted by multiple discourses and genres that make up social, ideological, and historical life. Saussure's schema rests on a tripartite division of language: as language speech (*langage*), as a system of language forms (*langue*) and as individual speech (*parole*). Saussure argues that *langage* (language speech), although constituted by *langue* and *parole*, resists classification because it lacks internal unity and a consistent object of methodological analysis. Similarly, Saussure also argues that speech (*parole*) itself cannot present itself as an object of study - speech is "manifold and anomalous", but the

system of language forms (*langue*) from which it draws is a "self-contained whole and a principle of classification." Once the system of language is established in the first place among the facts of speech, "language becomes amenable to no other classification" (Saussure in Volosinov 1973: 60).

According to Volosinov, a number of irresolvable problems emerge from Saussure's schema. For one, in a characteristic inversion, abstract objectivism posits speech as a random, free, individual appropriation of linguistic forms that is *opposed* to the social fact of the language system. By this account, utterances defy systematic analysis as they are rendered thoroughly individual acts of speech communication. Yet as Volosinov notes, if speech (*parole*) is separated out from linguistic analysis, Saussure does suggest it is the constitutive factor in the evolution of language. Even so, Volosinov (1973: 61) argues that abstract objectivism and Saussure's linguistics in particular regard "history as an irrational force destroying the logical purity of the language system."

The sociological and ideological implications of the linguistic sciences are the departure point for the Bakhtin Circle's metalinguistic project. For Volosinov, the bias of philology and linguistics toward defunct and alien languages is itself less an arbitrary orientation than the outcome of history. If as the old linguist's joke goes, a language is a dialect with an army and a navy, Volosinov (1973: 75) emphasizes the enormous role "the alien word has played in the formation of all historical cultures." The 'civilizing force' of an alien language brings about unintended consequences, not the least of which is a new self-consciousness of vernaculars and local cultures. According to Volosinov, language is above all an historical phenomenon, yet it is precisely this constitutive feature that formalist linguistics is unable to recognize. Instead the object of study is organized around defunct, alien or reified languages. In other words, traditional linguistic analysis takes the monological utterance and its model of univocity and uniaccentual meaning as its departure point. Moreover because traditional linguistics cannot treat language as mutable and historically produced, it cannot conceive its hybridity

There is an irony in all this for both Volosinov and Bakhtin because the perception of language as a system of self-identical linguistic forms can only be perceived as such by an individual (monological) consciousness. While Saussure is the target of this polemic, Hirschkop (1999: 18) proposes an alternative reading that emphasizes Saussure's orientation to 'ordinary speakers' and a linguistic project that focuses on the conditions of knowledge that allow for participation. Hirschkop suggests that Saussure leaves diachronic linguistics to the historians, but Volosinov (1973: 66) argues that a truly objective analysis of

language requires an interrogation of its "ceaseless generation of linguistic norms ... its ceaseless becoming."

Bakhtin's takes up these questions in his historical poetic project where the *bildungsroman* is singled out for its emphasis on historical becoming. As variants of the *bildungsroman,* the novels of Goethe and Rabelais represent unique moments of historical becoming, although the most significant example of collective becoming is in Rabelais' *bildungsroman*. Bakhtin is unequivocal about Rabelais' artistic intent to represent the transformation of official medieval culture by a popular and ambivalent logic that is expressed not only in the laughing chorus of the people, but in the oral speech forms and genres that pervade the heteroglossia of the marketplace chronotope. Praise and abuse are significant oral speech forms in Bakhtin's analysis for they represent "two sides of the same coin." These billingsgate idiom constitute a "two-faced Janus" in which "excessive praise" turns quickly to "excessive invective" (Bakhtin 1984: 164-5). Yet for Bakhtin, Rabelais' achievement is not that his repertoire consists of oral forms and genres, but that with him the vernacular enters the high spheres of European literature and ideology for the first time. In other words, in the history of European literature, Rabelais' work constitutes that first moment when the words and speech of the people become art.

For Bakhtin, the historical significance of a Renaissance artistic consciousness is that it made it possible for Rabelais to represent an emerging national language "from the outside, that is, through the eyes of other idioms." While this permitted an exceptional linguistic freedom, Rabelais' artistic vision became "possible only when an essential historic change of language occurs" (Bakhtin 1984: 471). Bakhtin argues that the artistic devices used for developing the image of heteroglossia emerged from the low genres. Here "on the itinerant stage, in public squares on market day, in street songs and jokes" were chronotopes and devices capable of joining discourse to a specific kind of person (Bakhtin 1981: 400). Rabelais' novels represent the languages of priests, merchants, and peasants so that each "has its own selfish and biased proprietor… there are no words with meaning shared by all..." and direct, referential meaning exists only as the "false front of the word" (Bakhtin 1981: 401). In the raw heteroglossia of marketplace speech, "the clown sounded forth ridiculing all languages" (Bakhtin 1981: 272-274). The profound scepticism provoked in literary representations of heteroglossia such as Rabelais' opens the way for a new stylistic device that Bakhtin describes as a gay, intelligent deception. He writes: "Opposed to the *lie of pathos* accumulated in the language of all recognized and structured professions, social groups and classes, there is no straightforward truth (pathos of the same kind) but rather a gay and intelligent deception, a *lie* justified because it is directed precisely to *liars*" (Bakhtin

1981: 401-2). Double voiced discourses are pivotal here, as are hidden polemics, but the devices of non-understanding and stupidity are a 'determining factor' in novels that incorporate heteroglossia. These devices constitute a 'polemical failure' to understand "someone else's pathos-charged lie that has appropriated the world and aspires to conceptualize it..." (Bakhtin 1981: 403-403). Here Bakhtin echoes Volosinov's earlier analysis of signs and signification. Volosinov (1973: 23) writes:

> each living sign has two faces, like Janus. Any current curse word can become a word of praise, any current truth must inevitably sound to many other people as the greatest lie. This *inner dialectical quality* of the sign comes fully out in the open in times of social crises or revolutionary changes.

For Bakhtin, the gay deception signals the two-faced character of the sign that is deployed as a parody and negation of official truths. In this reading of Rabelais, pathos is almost always equivalent to a lie; the gay deception "taunts the human word by a parodic destruction of syntactic structures." In the mouths of the rogue, the fool or the clown, "truth is restored by reducing the lie to an absurdity" (Bakhtin, 1981: 309).

Umberto Eco's semiotics provides an interesting theoretical elaboration that helps situate Bakhtin's discussion of the gay deception. As Eco (1979: 7) elaborates, signs are most properly understood as standing in for, or as a substitution for something "which does not necessarily have to exist…" Eco (1979: 7) continues: "Thus *semiotics is in principle the discipline studying everything which can be used in order to lie.* If something cannot be used to tell a lie, conversely it cannot be used to tell the truth: it cannot be used 'to tell' at all." In this sense, the arbitrary relationship between signifier and signified as the bearer of truth about a state of affairs – this means that – also bares the lie – this could not mean that. In Rabelais, the gay deception reveals the sign as non-identical and as a negation of all that is official. As a result, all truths are relativized and revealed as only "one way to hypothesize meaning."

Bakhtin's (1981: 465) appreciation of Rabelais stems from his representation of a new language in the state of its own becoming, for the Renaissance was "the only period in the history of European literature which marked the end of a dual language and a linguistic transformation." Bakhtin is also particularly interested in Rabelais' representation of the two-worlds of medieval culture. In this view the medieval marketplace, particularly during carnival and popular festivals, represents the second life of the people. Outside of the official life prescribed by medieval hierarchies "the marketplace of the Middle Ages and the

Renaissance was a world in itself…" (Bakhtin 1981: 153). In general, folk culture and the festive marketplace were constituted by a certain *extra-territoriality*. Bakhtin writes: "In the world of official order and official ideology", the medieval marketplace was "the center of all that was unofficial...it was always with the people" (Bakhtin 1981: 154). Bakhtin (1981: 73) argues that the two worlds of medieval culture prepared the ground for Renaissance conceptions of laughter that were transformed to a "state of artistic awareness and purposefulness" in Rabelais. Popular laughter expressed the social conscience of the folk and was characterized by its "exceptional radicalism, freedom, and ruthlessness" (Bakhtin 1981: 71). Laughter itself was an expression of the material bodily principle, but it also signalled a different orientation to time and change. Although it remained outside the serious tone of official festivals and rituals, Bakhtin remarks that these contradictory aspects of medieval culture pointed to its Janus face. He (Bakhtin 1981: 81) writes: "Its official, ecclesiastical face was turned to the past and sanctioned the existing order, but the face of the people of the marketplace looked into the future and laughed, attending the funeral of the past and present."

Although Bakhtin suggests that the medieval institution of carnival lies somewhere on the boundaries between art and life, he is particularly interested in the history of carnival's transformation from social institution to literary chronotope and genre. While the rise of bourgeois institutions is accompanied by a decline in public festive activities, Bakhtin (1984a: 131) comments on how Renaissance literature is 'carnivalized' by the festive marketplace. The chronotope essay discusses a range of settings and contexts suitable for analysis in the novel structure, but Rabelais' market square, the central site and object of Bakhtin's analysis, suggests itself on a number of grounds. For one, Bakhtin is impressed by the remarkable publicity that pervades Rabelais' representation of marketplace speech. Furthermore, if the market square provides the chronotope through which Bakhtin theorizes processes of linguistic change, the unique historical conditions of the Reformation and Renaissance offer a singular exemplar of the confrontation between two languages and two social groups.

The boundary between official and folk culture was drawn on linguistic lines and the intense 'interorientation' between official speech and vernaculars was complicated by further intersections between classical and medieval Latin. As concrete, social philosophies, languages are "penetrated by a system of values inseparable from living practice and class struggle" (Bakhtin 1984a: 471) The new social forces of the period "were most adequately expressed in the vernacular" which emerged in the development of a national language (Bakhtin 1984a: 467). Yet this relationship between official and unofficial languages is

characterized as a struggle not simply between two worldviews and philosophies but between two radically different forms of thought. For Bakhtin, Rabelais' achievement is that he gave literary expression to this confrontation and in so doing was able to represent the transition to and birth of a new (national) language. Ives (2004) examines the Bakhtin Circle's consistent polemics against unified national languages, but he acknowledges that the Rabelais book offers a distinct counterpoint to those critiques. In that sense, Ives (2004: 86) suggests that Bakhtinian scholars' attention to the carnivalesque has come at the expense of the significance of Bakhtin's analysis of the historical transformation of medieval culture.

Bakhtin (1981: 417) suggests that the study of a novel's stylistic appropriation of heteroglossia "confronts a unique difficulty in the fact that the process of transformation (to which every language phenomenon is subject) occurs at a very rapid rate of change..." Two processes of change interest Bakhtin in this context - canonization and reaccentuation. In some instances the languages of heteroglossia are subject to canonization where through a process of incorporation, they lose their flavour of 'belonging to another language'. Canonization differs from processes of reaccentuation because the stylistic requirements of a canon treat another's language on 'the same plane.' During periods of social stability canons evolve slowly and over time incorporate conservative stylistic shifts, however during periods of social unrest new canons appear as rapidly as the old ones are discarded. Heteroglossia in the novel makes the most of these moments by re-accentuating official worldviews and representing them as words 'belonging to another language.' The diversity of genres and discourses are brought into an "artistic *system* of languages, or more accurately as system of *images* of languages" (Bakhtin 1981: 416). A word may be used in ways that reveal its one-sided serious face, but its full and contradictory meaning "can never be completely extinguished" and "under the changed conditions this meaning may emit bright new rays, burning away the reifying crust that had grown up around it" (Bakhtin 1981: 419).

Conclusion

This critique of Habermas' reformulation of reification in the theory of communicative action and formal pragmatics established itself through the alternative articulations of Bakhtin and Volosinov's metalinguistic and historical poetic projects. My attention pivoted on how Habermas and the Bakhtin Circle identify reifications in language and the consequences those diagnoses entailed for their broader theoretical pursuits. Although their differences are historically located in the distinct contexts from which they emerge as well as the separate value spheres of ethics and aesthetics to which they are addressed, there are significant

implications for how the issue of reification is identified and how language is theorized in the present historical moment.

As we saw, Habermas' reconstruction of historical materialism leaves behind key Marxist categories in the turn to communicative action. In this project, reaching understanding comes to stand in as the inherent telos of speech and as a diagnostic of reification. This effort rests on the uncoupling of labour and interaction in the attempt to immunize the lifeworld from the exercise of strategic and instrumental action that are relegated to the systems of money and power. Habermas' attempt to secure a site and form of rational action outside the exercise of power is central to his efforts to reformulate reification as a violation of Kantian moral law. As untenable as that is, the effort to secure a site of a non-coercive rational form of action that treat human beings as an end in themselves, may be a laudable pursuit in the realm of ethics. However a reformulation of reification that is founded on the abandonment of Marxist categories rests on much shakier ground. The explicit purpose of this project is to re-assert the lifeworld as the site of a communicative action that can act as a steering medium over the systems of money and power. This democratic project is grounded in the trans-historical claims of a communication oriented to reaching understanding and agreement, yet as Mouffe (2000: 93) argues these efforts ultimately rest on a misguided search for rational solutions and a denial of the paradox between democracy and liberalism.

Habermas' project is underpinned by a commitment to formal pragmatics that is equally problematic in the requisite that participants subscribe to identical meanings or definitions of a situation or state of affairs. While I argue that this pragmatic project operates as a form of identity thinking that suffers from its own reifications, it also poses questions about the democratic and universalistic presumptions of Habermas' discourse model. Even as Habermas recognizes that questions of meaning are not resolvable in semantics, he remains dismissive of semiotics not simply for its universalizing of the sign, but as I have argued, for its rejection of identity thinking. This is most evident in the Bakhtin Circle's critique of Saussure and their metalinguistic and historical poetic projects where value and meaning are theorized as non-identical. Their semiotic method analyzes how value is reproduced (or made identical) in monological efforts to fix meaning, while the non-identical is revealed in processes of signification and in the social heteroglossia of everyday life. As a result, reifications in language are theorized as monological efforts to expropriate value from the surplus of meaning that Volosinov and Bakhtin attribute to the social fact of heteroglossia. Hybridization acts as an antidote to reification in the same way as it is central to the historical generation of new language. This endeavour, as historically and geographically variable as it

must be, represents the core of a political and cultural project in the Bakhtin Circle's semiotic method.

There is a further question that deserves attention in the present discussion. What are the implications of thinking of strategies of deception or non-understanding as indices of reification, as Habermas does, and what are the implications of seeing them as negations of all that is official, as Bakhtin's reading of the gay deception does? In an ethical discourse such as Habermas', the treating of individuals as means to an end is a violation of Kantian moral law as well as a violation of the social bonds of community. But in an aesthetic project that conceives and seeks to represent the collective body of the people in the making of history, the negation of all that is official requires that the people have the last laugh.

Notes

1. The discussion over authorship is taken up in Clark & Holquist (1984), Morson L& Emerson (1990), Titunik (1984) & Hirschkop (1999).
2. See Brandist's essay for a discussion on Bakhtin's relationship to Marxism. Liberal pluralist accounts of Bakhtin are found in Holquist (1990), Emerson (1997), Morson (1989), while Marxist readings of Bakhtin are elaborated in Bennett (1979) and White (1987-8).
3. The early works of Bakhtin, translated and published in English in the 1990s, brought a renewed emphasis on Bakhtin's neo-Kantianism. See Liapunov & Holquist (1993) and Holquist & Liapunov (1990).

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