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M. M. Bakhtin and "World Literature"

Katerina Clark

In recent years, scholars in a variety of fields have been interested in the phenomenon of diaspora. Many have sought ways to analyze the impact on cultural, ethnic or national identity when large numbers of people from one ethnic group or country find themselves, whether by accident or design, scattered over many other countries. In our present diasporic age when, for example, the distinction between colonial and metropolitan culture is eroding, there has been a revival of interest in the concept "world literature," a notion first introduced by Goethe in an essay of 1827.[1] In seeking models for going about the study of "world literature" many have turned to the examples of Leo Spitzer and Erich Auerbach, Jewish exiles from Nazi Germany who found academic employment in Istanbul where they meditated world literature, or more precisely wrote about literary phenomena in a strikingly transnational way. Auerbach's *Mimesis*, essentially the summa of his Istanbul musings, has long been regarded as a milestone in the evolution of Comparative Literature, but has recently been looked at anew precisely because of its diasporic inception.[2]

At approximately the same time, in the mid to late thirties, Bakhtin was part of another diaspora, the diaspora of those Soviet intellectuals dispersed in the many camps of the Gulag or, as in his case, in exile (Bakhtin was sent first to Kazakhstan and then to Saransk where he was surounded by Mordvinians, who speak a non-Indo-European language—and by camp guards; in 1936 he moved to exile in Savelovo, one hundred odd kilome-

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ters from Moscow but close enough for him to be able to resume something approaching his former intellectual life).

When scholars have sought to contextualize Bakhtin's writings from the mid to late thirties they have largely placed him in terms of the Stalinist regime and its culture: Was he obliquely attacking Stalinist repression as one who had suffered from it might well be inclined to do? Or was he in some strange sense an apologist for Stalinist excesses as Mikhail Ryklin has argued (Ryklin 64). In the Rabelais book Bakhtin cautioned against giving any interpretation of Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel* based on the author's political circumstances, and while one is often tempted to see this or that point made by Bakhtin in his texts of these years as veiled political commentary, and in local instances this may be the case, it seems far-fetched to argue that he mustered such a barrage of literary erudition, and fastened on Rabelais as his subject matter, merely to provide camouflage for a critique of Stalinism.

Arguably, while biographically Bakhtin belongs with the Soviet internal diaspora of exile and the camps, intellectually he belongs more with the anti-fascist diaspora, and especially with its contingent of displaced germanophone intellectuals. Though through his writings he entered into the debates on literary theory of his time, he did so to a marked degree using the diaspora's literary-cum-philosophical framework. Looking at Bakhtin's writings from this perspective also enables us to situate Bakhtin in terms of the recent debates about "world literature." More specifically, here I shall place his works in the particular context of a trans-national anti-fascist movement from the mid to late thirties in which this diaspora played a leading role, and in relation to this movement's concept of "world literature." In so doing, I shall confine myself largely to a discussion of three major texts written by Bakhtin in exile during the late thirties: the essay on the chronotope of 1937–8, the extant fragments from his book on the novel of education (written before 1938) and, primarily, his dissertation on Rabelais, the first redaction of which was submitted to the Gorky Institute (Moscow) in 1940.

In these works Bakhtin emerges, as do so many leading Germanophone intellectuals of the anti-fascist diaspora, as essentially a product of the German intellectual world of the early twentieth century. In his various extant writings, whatever the subject matter, the theoretical apparatus is generally derived from German sources, whether from Kant,

Hegel, Woellflin or Rohde; the Neo-Kantians (especially Hermann Cohen) were also major influences, as he himself acknowledged,[3] as was Nietzsche, the principal model for Bakhtin's mentor in his student days, F. F. Zelinsky. But contemporary theoreticians from the germanophone diaspora were also important. For example, Brian Poole in a recent article has plotted Bakhtin's progressive shift from his preoccupations of the twenties to those of the late thirties in terms of his successive immersion, starting before 1936 and continuing after 1938, in the texts of another member of the anti-fascist diaspora, Ernst Cassirer; Poole points out that the Rabelais book includes, unacknowledged, entire pages lifted from Cassirer.[4]

Cassirer was then in exile in Sweden (and in Yale from 1941) but there was also in Soviet Russia of that time a sizeable sub-group from the same diaspora as Auerbach and Spitzer, exiles from Nazi Germany, Austria, Hungary and to some extent Czechoslovakia who conducted most of their intellectual activity in German. This group was provided three German language periodicals as outlets, firstly *Das Wort,* Moscow-based but edited by Brecht who then resided in Denmark and elsewhere, together with Leon Feuchtwanger, who lived on the French Riviera, and Willy Bredel in Moscow. *Das Wort* serviced to a large extent the entire Germanophone diaspora, including writers in Europe (such as Benjamin who contributed from Paris), America, Palestine and Latin America. The other two periodicals, the journal *Internationale Literatur* and the newspaper *Deutsche Zentral-Zeitung* were entirely edited in Moscow but were also outlets for these writers.

This germanophone group were an important intellectual context for Bakhtin at that time if for no other reason than that Lukács published in all three of these periodicals. As Galin Tihanov has argued in *Master and Slave*, probably Bakhtin's principal *de facto* intellectual interlocutor of this time was not a Russian contemporary but Gyorgy Lukács who was in Moscow exile for most of the thirties.[5] It is unlikely, but not improbable, that Bakhtin read these particular journals. However, in all probability he read the Lukács articles in Russian translation in that they were published virtually simultaneously in *Literaturnyi kritik* (founded 1933), the principal journal for Soviet literary criticism which was absolutely dominated in these years by Lukács and his Russian coterie, who were leading formulators of Soviet literary theory until 1940 when the journal was attacked and closed. Moreover, major Soviet newspapers such as *Pravda* and *Literatur-*

naia gazeta frequently published items by foreign anti-fascist intellectuals and reviewed their books, and Bakhtin almost certainly read much of this material as well.

Thus what I am talking about here is a contemporary intellectual context for Bakhtin that is Soviet, but simultaneously (thanks to such factors as the participation of Lukács and others in Soviet periodicals) also German/pan-European. Bakhtin in effect joined in the debates of the germanophone intellectuals as an unheard participant. For example, his "Epic and Novel" of 1941 has to be seen as having been written primarily in response not just to Lukács' *Theory of the Novel*, which Bakhtin had read in the twenties, but also to such of his writings of the thirties as his programmatic essay, "Narration or Description" which appeared in *Literaturnyi kritik* in 1936. The original, dissertation, redaction of the Rabelais book also includes a discussion of Lukács and others from the *Literaturnyi kritik* set.[6] Indeed, his dissertation's title, *Francois Rabelais in the History of Realism (Fransua Rable v istorii realizma)* was arguably patterned on that of Lukács' Russian collection of articles *On the History of Realism (K istorii realizma),* published in 1939, which Bakhtin discusses in the dissertation (but not in the 1965 book), pronouncing it worthy but limited because it does not go back far enough in time.[7] It should also be noted that, though Bakhtin was generally an opponent of Lukács, his canonical list of great literature from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and his aversions, were similar to those of Lukács (this does not apply to Rabelais and Dostoevsky, however). Moreover, though Bakhtin did not participate in the famous debate on Expressionism that took place in the pages of *Das Wort* from September 1937 until July 1938 and which in effect pitted Brecht, Ernst Bloch, Hans Eisler and others against Lukács and the majority of the Moscow-centered anti-fascists, Bakhtin would have been in the anti-Expressionist (anti-modernist) camp and in that regard, in effect, an antagonist of Benjamin.

There is, of course, a critical difference between Bakhtin's position and that of the Moscow-centered anti-fascists—the extent to which their writings were steeped in Marxism. Even the 1940, dissertation, version of Rabelais contains surprisingly little reference to Marxism, perhaps because it was to be presented in an institute rather than for publication. Arguably, however, one might profitably view Bakhtin's writings from the second half of the thirties in a broader, less specifically Marxist-oriented intellec-

tual context, one under which the Germanophone anti-fascists can be subsumed, that of the Popular Front, a new political reality that had a profound impact on Soviet culture of these years.

The Popular Front was an international, anti-fascist alliance to which the Soviet Union was committed and that was in operation between 1935 and 1938 or 39. The Front did not just involve alliances between political parties and states, but also formed a trans-national anti-fascist front of intellectuals, one which the Soviet government was eager to unite under the banner of Moscow.[8] In the interests of such an alliance already in 1935 significant shifts occurred in the Soviet ideological and cultural platform, shifts that can be seen particularly in two events of that year: in June the Paris Congress for the Defence of Culture (a banner event for the leftist, anti-fascist movement among intellectuals which was attended by writers from throughout the world); and the speech made by Georgi Dimitroff on August 2, 1935 to the Seventh Congress of the Comintern where he effectively called for muting dogmatic insistence on a Soviet or Marxist perspective in the interests of uniting intellectuals throughout the world in the anti-fascist cause (even such previously unthinkable categories as Anarchists and Catholics) (Dmitrov 561–639).

Anti-fascist intellectuals allied with the Popular Front sought new versions of identity that ignored ethnic particularity and would of course in that regard stand in stark contrast to the platform of the Nazis, their arch rivals as formulators of cultural identity. Theirs would be a secular cultural identity, essentially a secular faith. Its mantras were foregrounded at the 1935 Paris Congress for the Defence of Culture which, in broad terms, defined their platform (the decision to found *Das Wort* came from there). The anti-fascist writers stood counterposed to the Nazis who represented "barbarity" (*Barbarei*); nazis were "destroyers of culture" (*Kulturzerstoerer*),[9] and even subhuman creatures, "beasts of prey" (*Raubtiere*).[10] By contrast, *they*, the anti-fascists, were valiant defenders of "Reason," "Humanism," and "Culture"—*and* of "world literature."

'World literature' was also a central item in the cultural platform of the Soviet thirties from 1934 or 1935 more or less until the time of the Molotov-Ribbentropp Non-Aggression Pact of August 1939, though, as became particularly marked from 1937, the platform was simultaneously and increasingly promoting "folk culture" (read Russian national culture). Bakhtin, ever sensitive to the hegemonic discourse of his Soviet world, in

his writings of the late thirties foregrounds both "world literature" and "folk culture" but not as counterposed values as they in effect were. Fortunately, the Russian term for "folk," *narodnyi*, is multi-valent. In many of its characteristic uses of the Stalinist thirties it meant state, national, or of the "folk"—i.e. of peasants or of representatives of the national minorities. But as Bakhtin uses *narodnyi* in his Rabelais book it refers more to the popular culture of the urban fairground and market square (*gorodskaia ploshchad'* [*Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable* 162]), or even to subcanonical and parodic genres to be found in the culture of the church and court. At the same time, *narodnyi* happens to be the word used for "popular" in the Russian term for Popular Front (*Narodnyi front*).

Bakhtin's career in the late thirties was marked by the trappings of this Popular Front moment. For example, he submitted his dissertation to the Institute of World Literature of the Academy of Sciences, an institution founded in 1935, the year the Popular Front was first instituted and which possibly owes its grandiose title to that coincidence. Even in the humble Pedagogical Institute in provincial Saransk where he worked in 1936 his one-man department was called World Literature, but, significantly, was downgraded to just "Literature" when he returned there from exile in the less internationalist late forties. Also, the shift from Bakhtin in his writings of the twenties to Bakhtin of the thirties is, *inter alia*, marked by a shift in the dominant literary examples he uses. Russian literature, which was so prominent in his works of the twenties (consider the entire monograph on Dostoevsky), is scantily represented in those writings of the thirties.

Even Bakhtin's choice of Rabelais for his dissertation could be connected to the cultural politics of the Popular Front era, though Bakhtin had been meditating some version of this project for some time before the Popular Front emerged. Accounts vary as to exactly when this book was written.[11] One of the more authoritative, the biography by S. S. and L.S. Konkin, says that he worked on the book progressively, starting in Petrograd of the early twenties, continuing in exile in Kustanai and Saransk (1936–37), and finishing while living in Savelovo where he enjoyed better access to books and journals (Konkin and Konkin 299). Undoubtedly whatever might or might not have been written by the late thirties was at that time framed and inflected by the discourse and ideals of the Popular Front moment.[12]

The choice of Rabelais over Goethe (on whom he had also been working) may have something to do with the cultural politics of this time.[13] On February 9, 1936, there appeared in *Pravda* an item announcing that the new Institute for World Literature had already begun collecting for its library and it boasted the recent acquisition of "the fifty-volume collected works of Zola, the works of Rabelais and a collection of Spanish classics" ("Institut mirovoi literatury" n. pag.). Clearly the selection that *Pravda* chose to name from the over 50,000 recent acquisitions to the Institute library reflects the recent national importance of links with the Popular Front in France and the struggle against the fascists in Spain.[14] One could speculate that the official priorities implicit in this selection had some bearing not only on the subject of the dissertation but also the fact that Bakhtin, in his introduction to the Rabelais book, foregrounds Spain's literary classic, Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, as another prime example of the "carnival sense of the world [*karnaval'noe mirooshchushchenie*]" (*Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable* 30).[15]

Here I have to admit that I have been cheating a little. The term "carnival sense of the world" does not appear in this discussion of Cervantes in the original dissertation of 1940, but only in the revised version of this book on which all the Western commentary has thus far been based, that is, the redaction Bakhtin prepared in the sixties and published in 1965. In the first, 1940, version of his dissertation, the opening, introductory chapter differs markedly from the 1965 version after the first few pages. Moreover, in the dissertation Rabelais' epoch-making contribution to literary evolution is defined not as "carnival" but as "Gothic Realism," a term no doubt indebted to debates on the Gothic that took place in the pages of *Literaturnyi kritik,* but also to the fact that it was virtually mandatory in that decade when the term socialist realism was invented to identify any positive phenomenon in literature as "realism," or at least proto-"realism." Literary histories (paradigmatically in Lukács) tended to advance some teleological model whereby literature came into its own in "realism," a development that was then superceded by socialist realism (a term Bakhtin avoids discussing). In *Literaturnyi kritik* "realism" is often provided a long lineage that extends back to Leonardo and Cervantes. It is not, however, the case that Bakhtin does not use the term carnival in the dissertation. It is mentioned only once in the first chapter—in the context of Cervantes—but in the succeeding chapters it is ubiquitous though it does not

replace the term "Gothic realism" which continues to be used throughout, sometimes replaced by "grotesque realism," anticipating Bakhtin's obsession with the grotesque in the 1965 redaction. But "world literature," a term much in vogue in the anti-fascist movement, is prominent in both redactions.

Those attending the Paris Congress of 1935 proposed "world literature" as an antidote to fascist nationalism and to suggest that *their* movement would deliver something grander. Its prominence in the discourse of the Popular Front also bespeaks a naive faith in the power of literature. But "world literature" was a vague concept, even in Goethe who to some extent promoted it in the context of his successes in getting his works published in other (European) countries.[16]

So the question must be asked, especially given the concept's revival in this (our) very different age, what does "world literature" mean? Is it an ideal, or a reality? Is it just a fatuous generalization such as we find in characterizations by Bakhtin that give his writings a bad name—e.g. "panhuman [*vsechelovecheskoe*]," "universal [*universal'noe*]," "utopian [*utopicheskoe*]" (Bakhtin, *Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable*, 15)—but which were also characteristic of the rhetoric of the Popular Front? Is "world literature" necessarily a literature without national specificity? Or without ethnic specificity? Would the term mean one, relatively homogenized literature for all? Or does the term really mean a literature infused with a single world view? Perhaps, underneath it all, "world literature" is the Trojan horse of an ideological megalomania or the mantra of an impossible idealism (in the case of the cultural arm of the Popular Front, and especially as directly or indirectly Moscow dominated, there were clearly varying proportions of both)? Or would a "world literature" be a hybrid or a patchwork quilt comprising titles from different cultures? Is it a literature which *happens* to have a transnational readership, or is it, defined more ambitiously, a "world-historical" literature, by analogy with Hegel's "world historical" hero?

The framework for those who talk of "world literature" today is clearly not the same as that for the anti-fascists of the 1930s. The term has come back into currency in a post-post-colonialist world. But this expansion of its potential referents only complicates the problem of defining it.

Franco Moretti points out in a recent article in *New Left Review* that the shift from looking at literature with a Eurocentric focus (as the anti-

fascists largely did in the thirties) to talking in terms of a "world literature" potentially involves an impossible task—that is, including in one's purview *all* the literatures of *all* the countries and ethnic groups of the entire world. He argues instead for what might be called, to invoke a Marxist distinction, a *qualitative* rather than a mechanically quantitative approach (i.e. discussing more books or more countries or more traditions). Moretti's next move, however, is not to look at "world literature," so to speak, synchronically, but rather diachronically; he presents a model for the evolution of world literature, a road map charting the route from the many, disparate literatures, both oral and written, to today's "world literature" by asserting that "when a culture starts moving towards the modern novel it's *always* as a compromise between foreign form and local materials." He goes on to point out that though the trajectory for the novel's development has traditionally been traced in terms of "the Spanish, the French, and especially the British case" it turns out "*they're not the rule at all, they're the exception.*" The "rule" he sees, using a model that was a favorite of the Russian Formalists, comes from the peripheral or marginal literatures (Moretti 65).

Here Moretti's model begs comparison with that of Bakhtin who also, in his several major essays and book projects of the mid to late thirties, was essentially thinking through models for the evolution of "world literature." In terms of Moretti's scheme, Bakhtin's repeated excursions into the history of literary evolution might be seen as dated, misguided and Eurocentric. *His* "world literature," a term he uses fairly interchangeably with "European literature," would not be recognized as such today. He in effect posits transnational genealogies for each of the genres and literary "isms" he studies, but every genealogy is confined to the borders of Europe. Yet, looking at a less superficial level we can see how Bakhtin's ideas run parallel with much recent thinking, though their content is, inevitably, largely different.

Moretti postulates some sort of interchange between the "foreign" and the "local"; "world literature" means using "local content" and "foreign forms," but also "local forms" (60). His article represents a version of the many recent attempts to think through the relationship, in this diasporic moment, between "metropolitan" and "subaltern," between the Anglo-American-cum-European and the third world vernacular, now refigured as a relationship between the national and the international or, more likely

since in this post-communist era of globalization the term "international" has become suspect, the "cosmopolitan."

But trying to think "world literature" and in so doing to strike a balance between the national and the international or cosmopolitan was also the preoccupation of the anti-fascist intellectuals of the thirties. The germanophone exiles needed a narrative to counterpose to the Nazi, and a cultural identity that accommodated the changed conditions, but they also needed a broader cultural alliance than their relatively small numbers could provide. The recurrent slogan, indeed ideal, of *Das Wort* and the other two Soviet German periodicals was "world literature," an idea which, inasmuch as it was first introduced by Goethe, could be taken as representing the German tradition—or even as showing Germans to be pioneers in cultural internationalism. Conveniently, both Goethe and Marx used the term "world literature," hence, as it were, *true* German culture and Marxism could be married under its canopy.[17]

Most German émigré intellectuals, in seeking models from their own culture to guide them in an uncertain present (and to counterpose to the models of the Nazis) promoted an edited version of a particular strand in the German cultural tradition which could be construed as both national and "cosmopolitan." In *Das Wort* a reinflected account of the German literary tradition was presented fairly systematically, an account foregrounding the ideals of "humanism," "justice" and above all "world literature." Each journal issue had a special section, "*Die Kulturerbe*," or "cultural heritage," in which the writings of some earlier German figure—generally in some extract, and therefore edited form—was presented, with an introductory article, as a model for thinking cultural identity in the exiles' present situation. The various critical articles and speeches published between 1935 and 1939 in the other two Soviet German-language periodicals, *Internationale Literatur* and *Deutsche Zentral-Zeitung*, also generally drew on similar sources from the German cultural tradition.

The focus was on a group of intellectuals writing between the second half of the eighteenth century and approximately 1831 or 1832 (the years of Hegel's and Goethe's deaths). In Germany, it embraces the late Enlightenment and early Romanticism. Its principal figures such as Goethe, Schiller, Fichte, Herder, Hegel, the brothers Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt, and their perceived heirs from later years, such as Holderlin, differed among themselves in many ways in their accounts of German cul-

tural identity, but they are generally classified as "progressive nationalists," and as such contrasted with the kind of nationalism that characterized Bismark and the German state after unification. An important feature of this group is that they defined nation by language and culture. In fact, many of them counterposed their accounts of German cultural identity with the tyrannical and autocratic regimes in power in the various principalities of Germany at that earlier time. In the pre-unification period these writers had no all-powerful German state to oppose, but nor did they have one to identify with and thus their writings had particular resonance for the Germans in exile trying to define "Germanness" *outside* any specific geographical boundaries or divisions—to define diaspora nationhood. Some invoked the concept of "Kulturnation" which in its genesis goes back to Wieland in the late Enlightenment.

Similarly, recent theoreticians of diaspora have begun to argue that there is no necessary contradiction between the call of the national and that of the "cosmopolitan." An important source for this position, a collection of articles edited by Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins which was published in 1998, is called *Cosmopolitics*, but subtitled *Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation*. The new proponents of a post-postcolonialist "cosmopolitanism," many of whom represent diasporas from Africa or Asia, sometimes discuss this concept in terms of the writings of Kant and Fichte, or more specifically in terms of Kant's essays "Idea toward a Universal History in a Cosmopolitan Respect" (1784) and "Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Project" (1796), or Fichte's *Addresses to the German Nation* of 1808. Cheah, for example, writing in his introduction to *Cosmopolitics*, points out that both Kant and Fichte wrote at a time when Europe was made up of absolutist dynastic states, the popular national state did not exist, and the doctrine of nationalism had not yet been "fully articulated." Consequently, he argues, even when, as in these cases, "cosmopolitanism is diluted in its usage to designate a universally normative concept of culture identified with the culture of a certain ethnolinguistic people," it is still compatible with nationalism because the national culture in question is not yet bonded to the territorial state and can be accorded world historical importance without being imperialistic (Cheah, "Introduction," 21, 24).[18]

The German exiles' *Kulturerbe* did not extend to Kant, doubtless because in Marxist Leninist doctrine his philosophy was the prime example

of idealism, the main antagonist of its own "materialist world view." But they did foreground Fichte, and especially his *Addresses to the German Nation*[19] in which the German tradition and the history of the development of the German language were accorded great potential for a true "cosmopolitanism" whereby Germans might become "world citizens of the spirit" (Franck 74).[20]

This "spirit," however, tended to prefer to waft around *some* cultural traditions more than others. On the pages of these three journal during the years of the Popular Front the *Kulturerbe* is presented more frequently in terms of a Franco-German axis than it is as a Russo-German axis (particularly in discussions of literature). It is doubtless for this reason that, for example, among Goethe's works "Hermann und Dorothea," which includes the French Revolution in its purview of Germanness, was cited much more on the pages of these journals than his major works such as *Faust*.

These journals promoted a version of that ideal of "world" literature even in their pious excavations into the *Kulturerbe*. A deftly revised version of the great period for German *Geist* effectively, in foregrounding the way writers from the disparate German principalities yearned for a German nation but were inspired in this very yearning by the French philosophes and the revolution that those philosophes had helped mastermind, provided an allegorical model for their own situation as exiles scattered over disparate lands in a diaspora, but looking to the model of the Soviet Union and the theorists who thought out its ultimate shape. French, or rather Romance literature in general, was the preoccupation of many other exiled German theoreticians of literature at this time, Auerbach's *Mimesis*, where German literature is very scantily represented, providing another prominent example. Lukács discusses German literature more often, but in his most seminal articles about the theory or evolution of literature such as "Narration or Description" he draws his principal examples not from German literature, but primarily from the French (plus Tolstoy, perhaps not coincidentally the writer about whom Lenin penned "Tolstoy, Mirror of the Russian Revolution"). Benjamin was of course also obsessed with French literature and culture.

This transnational account of literary evolution has parallels with recent thinking about "world literature" but more particularly about diaspora. Part of the recent move beyond the postcolonial position has been to get beyond the simplistic binarisms that it engenders (such as we find in

Moretti's somewhat reductivist foreign form/local content). Theoreticians have become interested in what might be called a diasporic sensibility. They have pointed out that, whatever their ideologies of purity, diasporic cultural forms can never, in practice, be exclusively nationalist or exclusively oriented around the one national tradition. Consequently, they explore what it is to have complex, multiple identities, a simultaneity of attachments and memories that "do not necessarily *succeed* one another in historical memory but echo back and forth."[21] Translation, multi-centeredness and "multiple adjacencies" (Radhakrishnan xxvii), are all endemic to the diasporic condition. For example, Paul Gilroy in his seminal book *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993) analyses the "black" cultural tradition as historically decentered, or multiply centered, a tradition that cannot be reduced to any national, or ethnically based origin and in part because so much of its history involves migration, exploration, interconnection, and travel. It also involves an intermingling of high and low, vernacular, mass (popular) and canonical, the oral and the written traditions.

Bakhtin, too, posits a more complex version of the evolution of literary genres, one which is transnational in that he largely ignores national boundaries and the boundary between the literary and the non-literary. One sees this particularly in his account of the evolution of carnival which crosses national borders in its progression from ancient Rome to France (Paris) to Nuremburg and Cologne without noticing them and never quite manages to perfect itself in his own country (Russia) (Bakhtin, *Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable*, 242).

Among all the German philosophers Bakhtin draws on in formulating his ideas for his writings of the late thirties, Fichte is conspicuously absent, but his account of literary evolution is nevertheless infused with a "cosmopolitan" ideal. Cheah, in his introductory article to *Cosmopolitics*, asserts that while "cosmopolitanism" "primarily designates an intellectual ethic, a universal humanism that transcends regional particularism" now, with globalization, "Cosmopolitanism is no longer merely an ideal project but a variety of actually existing practical stances" (Cheah, "Introduction," 22, 21). But Bakhtin places the moment when a sort of cosmopolitanism became "a variety of actually existing practical stances" at an earlier point in the history of literary evolution. A closer reading of his texts at this time reveals that the terms European literature and world literature are not in

fact used interchangeably. "European literature" appears often and is a descriptive term while "world literature," a more *pre*-scriptive term, is used sparingly and denotes a higher level of literary evolution, an ideal that has been, or is to be, realized. Yet it did not, as was often the case for the anti-fascist intellectuals of the Popular Front, involve a hegemonic symbolic or ideological system.

In Bakhtin's writings that mode which can elevate a work to the status of "world literature" is often called "carnival." This term is itself used very broadly. On the one hand, Bakhtin uses it to cover an array of sub- or anti-canonical popular cultural forms that he sees as having impacted literature in a decisive way. But in other moments his account of carnival emerges less as an empirical study of a particular author or a set of cultural practices to be found in certain places at certain times than as a disquisition on a particular mode, a perspective or an orientation which can have a salutary effect on officialistic, conventional or canonical cultural and literary practices, or even as a key term in a meta-literary and philosophical investigation.

In many of Bakhtin's writings the term "carnival" might, for want of a better formulation, be called the traveling mode, a mode that engenders an extra-local perspective. In this aspect it bears comparison not just with recent writing about diasporic sensibility but also with James Clifford's ideas in his book *Routes*. Here Clifford critiques the standard ethnographic practice of looking at a particular site—generally a village, an island or a cluster of villages in a particular locale—as if it was a hermetic unit, disregarding the reality that even in the most traditional cultures travel in multiple ways undermines the site's ethnographic purity. In consequence, Clifford calls on his fellow anthropologists to "rethink cultures as sites of dwelling *and* travel" (29).

Travel was also central to the culture of the Popular Front. The anti-fascists of the diaspora, and their fellow-travelers from throughout the world, traveled incessantly, both literally—to the interminable conferences—and more figuratively (such as by correspondence or publication). They participated in transnational networks built from multiple attachments. Bakhtin, by contrast, never traveled beyond the Soviet borders and never participated in transnational networks, except vicariously, in his reading. But in his account of literary evolution travel plays a crucial role.

As with Clifford in *Routes*, Bakhtin gives a critical function to the per-

spective of one who travels *beyond* or *into* a given locale. Travel, or rather the *ex*-centric, *extra*-local perspective it provides, is a crucial factor in advancing any literature to the level of "world literature." In Bakhtin's account of literary evolution in the chronotope essay, two negative poles of literary genre from the early history of the novel are discussed. On the one hand, there is the Greek novel of adventure time where the hero travels from country to country and although exotic detail is provided each new country he visits has no effect on his consciousness; indeed, each country is interchangeable with the other—as he puts it, Babylon might as well be Egypt, or vice versa (Bakhtin, "Formy vremeni" 250). A second negative example is the idyll chronotope where the world of the characters is static and hermetic, the hero is wholly engrossed in the "little world" (*mirok*) of his own home, his countryside and his country, inevitably becoming conventional ("Formy vremeni" 374).

In both the chronotope essay and the Rabelais book Bakhtin stresses the radical impact on literature of the opening up of the New World during the Renaissance when writers looked for a perspective beyond the horizon of the dominant world view (*Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable* 398–99). This is, incidentally, a similar point to one Auerbach makes in his chapter on Rabelais in *Mimesis*, but while in Auerbach the point provides the framing theme, in Bakhtin's less foregrounded discussion the impact of the expanded sense of the world is not principally reflected in surface plot. He argues that, though little of the New World entered literature from the eighteenth century on, in terms of actual subject matter, writings of that time, and those of Goethe in particular, are suffused with a different sense of the world that implies that broader perspective.

It is in this aspect that Rabelais *and* Goethe emerge as the true heroes in literature's progress toward the heights of a "world literature." Bakhtin's writings on Goethe have not been given much prominence in Bakhtin scholarship, partly because the Rabelais book is so much more lively and imaginative. Also, the original manuscript of his book on the novel of education where Goethe was a central topic was destroyed during the war and we are left with only fragments and notes. But, arguably, Bakhtin's take on Rabelais should not be looked at entirely in isolation but should be regraded as a counterpoint, or more likely as a complement, to his Goethe. One reason why this suggests itself is because Goethe and Rabelais are given a central position in his main texts of the thirties, quite lit-

erally. It is, I admit, somewhat problematic to make any point in terms of the organization of the texts which in Bakhtin's case are somewhat rambling; and of course such extracts as we have from his book on the novel of education are only sections of drafts. I nevertheless find it significant that Goethe's description of the Roman carnival in *The Journey to Italy* is discussed at the epicenter of the Rabelais book. In fact a quotation from this passage in Goethe provides one of two inscriptions to the overall dissertation (both omitted in the 1965 version). Similarly, Goethe and Rabelais are discussed in the middle of the essay on the chronotope, and Rabelais is discussed in Bakhtin's work on Goethe and the novel of education. Moreover, of all Goethe's writings Bakhtin chose to focus not on his more famous ones but on *The Journey to Italy*—not coincidentally a book about travel—with the rest of his coverage more or less confined to Goethe's autobiographical *Poetry and Truth* or his writings on science.

In Bakhtin's account of literary evolution presented in his writings from the late thirties it is actually not so much any particular author, such as Goethe, whom he sees as having had a decisive influence on its course but rather a handful of eccentric, *extraliterary* figures who have, as it were, infused literature with the traveling mode. This position is most strongly stated in the chronotope essay where he identifies them as the picaro or rogue (*plut*), the jester (*shut*) and the fool (*durak*) ("Formy vremeni" 308). It is such figures who save literature and, for that matter, all of culture, from the dread canonical, official or conventional. They see the falsity of every position, *and they laugh*. This "laughter," this distance from the conventional is, then, at the heart of the traveling mode, or of what Bakhtin calls in the Rabelais book "the carnival sense of the world." In charting the evolution of literature he maintains that the novel takes on board the perspective of the rogue, jester and fool, participants in extra-literary cultural practices. It is thanks to them, and to the impact of their practices that, in a book by a Sterne, or even one by Stendahl or a nineteenth century realist such as Balzac where the *plut* is transmogrified to the *parvenu* ("Formy vremeni" 277), the narrative has that healthy perspective, that distance, on its subject matter. We can see this in Rabelais, he contends, and in part in Goethe.

Here we sense a shift, a reinflection of Bakhtin's central theoretical preoccupation with the relationship between author and hero. If, in the twenties in his book on Dostoevsky he wrote in terms of polyphony, here

the author or narrator is a traveler, though an *outsider as insider.* The author or narrator is a traveler in a more figurative sense. He does not necessarily leave home but has an orientation toward the outsider's perspective.

The shift from polyphony in the Dostoevsky book to the picaro, jester and fool in the writings of the late thirties is also a shift from using a metaphor from music for the relationship of author to hero, or hero to hero, to conceiving that relationship more literally in terms of the popular theater. Bakhtin insists that these figures, whom he sees as having had such a decisive impact on literary evolution, have come into literature from the fairground with its puppets and its masks ("Formy vremeni" 309). Here the masks of the *shut* and the *durak* are to some extent transformed and come to the aid of the novelist. They have deep roots from the folk square. But the author has to don a mask, too ("Formy vremeni" 310). I might add here, by the way, that Clifford sees the "traveling indigenous culture maker" as a paradigmatic case of the way what he calls ex-centric figures undermine the purity of the local culture (25).

This curious lineage from the theater that Bakhtin traces in the evolution of "world literature," a lineage he also uses for "carnival," has many ramifications, most of which space does not permit me to cover here. One of these would be Bakhtin's ongoing debt to Nietzsche, the way Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* has in effect been transmogrified into a tale of The Rise of the Novel, or for that matter of "world literature" out of the Spirit of the Fairground Tent. Another would be links between Bakhtin's account of the impact of the fairground and the theatrical theories of Brecht (another leading figure of the germanophone diaspora), or more particularly of Meyerhold; in the prewar years when both Meyerhold and Bakhtin were in Petersburg a key term of Meyerhold's program for theatrical renovation was "the theater of the fairground tent"—*balagan*—a term also to be found recurrently in Bakhtin's account of carnival in Rabelais and the chronotope essay. He also identified his theatrical method with the grotesque.[22]

Another ramification would be the way, in articulating his ideas, Bakhtin was himself able to don the masks of Stalinist culture from his own time. Indeed, the centrality of masking in his accounts of both carnival and the novel is clearly indebted to a particular branch of theatrical theory but—coincidentally?—masking, or more particularly *un*masking, were central to Stalinist rhetoric about "tearing off the masks" of the ene-

mies of the people to reveal their true selves. Some of the sentences in the Rabelais book and the Chronotope essay have an eerie ring for anyone who has read the transcripts of the Great Purge Trials, Stalin's speeches from the mid to late thirties about the "enemies of the people," or *Pravda* articles and editorials about those tried. Bakhtin keeps insisting, for example, that his three heroes are not what they seem (a central argument made at the Show Trials to justify the fact that Party leaders had suddenly been pronounced "enemies of the people"). His three heroes are "*litsedei*," Bakhtin says, a word that can be translated as actor, but also as hypocrite or dissembler, and he sometimes refers to the narrator as a *sogliadatai*—in other words as a spy.

Bakhtin also asserts his three heroes' right to be *chuzhie* in this world, a word that means outsiders, but also aliens and thus potentially provides another echo of purge rhetoric. Bakhtin insists that, as "aliens," outsiders, it is their right to be "not of this world," one with which they have "no solidarity." Here we see the ambiguity in Bakhtin's account of the role of the mask. While Bakhtin sees his heroes, the picaro, jester and fool, and also their weapon, "carnival laughter," as prime agents of *exposure,* he also praises his heroes as poseurs who can assume any mask and can also see through and expose the falsehood of any situation (*Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable* 309), the very quality for which those accused at the trials were denounced. But *they* actually see the falsity of every position and they laugh. They are masked as agents of epistemological rectitude *qua* jokers and buffoons.

Bakhtin adds that, besides wearing masks, his heroes exult in travesty, in taking on disguises or crossdressing (this combination of an interest in the cosmopolitan and one in crossdressing is also found today, though Bakhtin in his account of travesty is less concerned with gender crossing). In his analysis of Goethe's *Travels to Italy* he highlights the fact that Goethe wore disguise. Bakhtin himself, as is often pointed out, often indulged in a form of verbal travesty—he ventrilloquated the positions and vocabulary of others, and especially of the official rhetoric of the day. We have seen how he ventrilloquated the rhetoric of the purges but his foregrounding in the Dostoevsky book of the term polyphony, then modish in articles describing the way Soviet culture was orchestrated, is another instance of this.

The analog to "polyphony" as a key term picked up from the press of

the late twenties is, in his works of the late thirties, "carnival." In the mid to late thirties, that is, the Popular Front years, the Soviet state (generally the trade unions) adopted "carnival" (*karnaval*)—the same term as Bakhtin uses in the Rabelais book—as a principal mode of mass public entertainment. Night-long carnivals were organized at places like Gorky Park in Moscow where there was all too much official ceremonial, to be sure, but at which when that was taken care of the revelers cavorted in masks and costumes until dawn. Moreover, press accounts and articles about the various public carnivals staged in the Soviet thirties recurrently use such key terms of Bakhtin's Rabelais study as people or folk ("*narod*" or "*narodnyi*"), "universal" (*vsenarodnyi*), "laughter" (*smekh,*), "humour" (*shutka*), "plenty" or "abundance" (*izobilie*), "the fairground" (*iarmarka*), and "the square" (*ploshchad'*).[23]

But at that time carnivals and festivals were also a central feature of the Popular Front Culture in France. Such fare, the French organizers believed, would provide bonding experiences, conduce to a more socialistic consciousness among the populace, and act as a safeguard against their acquiring a fascist mentality. The theoretical bases of these aims were also explored by those who, in Paris of 1937–1939, gathered together in an informal College of Sociology—which Benjamin attended sporadically. Many of those speaking there sought cultural forms that might be communitarian in ethos without falling into the totalitarianism of a fascism. One of them, Roger Caillois, rejected the novel as a genre appropriate for the times on the ground that it is something the individual reads in isolation in his room, a luxury item that could not be afforded with Hitler at the gates. In his essay of 1939 "The Festival" Caillois advocates instead a culture centered around mass festivals. It is, of course, unlikely that Bakhtin was familiar with the papers presented at the College of Sociology (though accounts of the Festivals promoted by the French Popular Front appeared sporadically in the Soviet cultural newspaper *Sovetskoe iskusstvo* and Bakhtin may have read them there), but it is interesting that in his writings of approximately that time he foregrounds, somewhat like Caillois, the danger that the novel will become a vehicle for pure subjectivity, for "*kamernost'*"—that is, for closeting in one's own room, whether literally or metaphorically (Hollier 45; Bakhtin, *Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable* 208). Unlike Caillois, however, Bakhtin contends that the novel has at times been, *and can still be*, saved by a healthy infusion of the culture, or more

specifically by the "sense of the world" (*mirooshchushchenie*), that can be derived from carnival and popular theatrical forms.

It is in this aspect, in the so to speak carnival formula for transcending arid subjectivity, that Bakhtin's account of Rabelais becomes most problematical and utopian. In the chronotope essay he argues that the entire function of the laughter of *plut, shut* and *durak* is to restore the public nature of the human. They "bring everything out onto the square," the entire function of their "parodic laughter" is to "render everything external" (*ovneshivat'*) so that interiority has been abolished ("Formy vremeni" 309–310). This position might seem close to Meyerhold's theory of acting which insisted that actors not attend to internal emotions and contemplation, as Stanislavsky would have them do, but rather to their external presentation of self. But rather than opt for one or other side of that dichotomy Bakhtin actually points out that the dichotomy of inside and outside is a false one. Here he invokes Goethe's observations in his writings on science that in nature "kernel" and "husk" are really not separate things since the one is forever evolving into the other ("Formy vremeni 286). It is after making this point that he identifies Rabelais as a hero of "world literature," that is, "world" that transcends the individualistic perspective.

We will note, however, that Bakhtin goes on to say that what the *plut, shut* and *durak* make external is "admittedly not their own existence but a reflected existence of others—but they [these figures] have no other" ("Formy vremeni" 309). They have no other because their entire being is as actors who conduce to laughter. But they also have no other existence because they are not spectators. One of Bakhtin's definitions of carnival is of a theater without footlights. Footlights, he insists, would destroy carnival because carnival "does not acknowledge the distinction between performers and audience." "Carnival does not contemplate," he continues. "People live it, and in fact all live it because in its very conception it is universal [*vsenaroden*]" (*Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable* 12).

And yet the traveling mode which is also central to Bakhtin's account of the way these three function both in literature and in the world implies spectatorship. Indeed, it is interesting to note that in Bakhtin's recounting at the epicenter of the Rabelais book of Goethe's description of Roman carnival he leaves out completely the element of spectatorship which is central to it. In Goethe's text he describes how, at the Roman carnival,

stands are erected for spectators and seats sold, how the wealthy circulate in carriages to see and be seen and how only the most beautiful girls would dare array themselves on the carriages and thus subject themselves to the gaze of so many spectators (Goethe 449–479).

In the chronotope essay Bakhtin comes up with a formula for his jester and buffoon as the "*bezuchastnyi uchastnik zhizni*" ("Formy vremeni" 311), literally the "non-participant participant in life," an oxymoron intended to elide the distinction between spectatorship and carnival. But "*bezuchastnyi*" also has connotations of neutrality, of an intellectual and emotional distance from the subject observed. And let us not forget here the way Bakhtin lionized what he called the "eternal spy," a sinister variant of the *flâneur*?

Arguably, this ambiguity is central to Bakhtin's theories of the late thirties. Rather as Clifford in *Routes* enjoins his fellow anthropologists to "rethink cultures as sites of dwelling *and* travel" and Franco Moretti in *New Left Review* explores possible ways of conceiving "world literature" in terms of a dance between the local or vernacular and the extra-local—if you will, between the *ex*-centric and the centric (by which is meant the hegemonic tradition of the Anglo-American cum European)—while the germanophone anti-fascists who were Bakhtin's contemporaries struggled to conceive "world literature" in a way that melded their own national tradition with the international, Bakhtin was obsessively trying to think the relationship between what Clifford calls the "site" but Bakhtin more often refers to as the "*Lokalität*" with its specificity and concreteness, and a broader, extra-local perspective and temporality. He most specifically meditates this problem in his book on Goethe and the novel of education, but it also underpins all his writings of this period where he tried to think of ways whereby the narrowness of the local and specific might be overcome—the task of those trying to meditate "world literature" today. This extra-local perspective that confounds and penetrates the overly static and conventionalized mind-set of the purely local is also related to Bakhtin's foundational ideal of non-fixity (*nazavershennost'*), and his emphasis on process; that which is simultaneously both one thing *and* its virtual opposite can be found in a plethora of examples he adduces in the Rabelais book, his favorites involving deaths that are also births. It is the *both* and the *and* which most concerns Bakhtin, and the relationship between the two. How that which is bounded and categorized might be confounded,

penetrated, destroyed, but at the same time illumined by the extra-local? How, also, the local might be apprehended from the position of "the fullness of world history"—the temporal extra-local (Bakhtin, "Roman vospitaniia" 239). How a local or even a European tradition might attain the stature of "world literature"?

As, in this journal issue, the various authors meditate the question of same and different for Bakhtin and Benjamin, I would like in concluding to draw attention to a remark Benjamin made in one of his formulations of his concept of the *flâneur* in "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century": "In Baudelaire," Benjamin writes, "Paris becomes for the first time the subject of lyric poetry. This poetry is not a regional art; rather, the gaze of the allegorist that falls on the city is estranged. It is the gaze of the *flâneur*" (Benjamin 156). "World literature" is to Bakhtin both extra-local and local, but not in the mechanical formula of Moretti that presumes a distinction between form and content. Rather, the mode or orientation of a literary work, its "sense of the world," inflects the local with the extra-local.

Notes

1. See John Pizer, "Goethe's 'World Literature' Paradigm and Contemporary Cultural Globalization"; Homi K. Bhabha, "DissemiNation: Time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation"; Frederic Jameson, "World Literature in an Age of Multicultural Capitalism."

2. See Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representations of Reality in Western Literature* and "Philologie der Weltliteratur." For Auerbach and diaspora studies, see Edward Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic*, 6; Emily Apter, "Competing Margins in the History of Comparative Literature," 86–97.

3. See for example the list of the philosophers he discussed that Bakhtin himself provided to V. D. Duvakin in a taped interview (Kant, assorted Neo-Kantians): "Razgovory s Bakhtinym," 157 (see also *Chelovek* 4 (1994): 151).

4. Poole mentions particularly the three-volume *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* [1923–29] and *The Individual in the Cosmos and Renaissance Philosophy, The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* and *Goethe and the* Historical *World*. See Poole, "Bakhtin and Cassirer: The Philosophical Origins of Bakhtin's Carnival Messianism"; esp. pp. 546–47.

5. See Galin Tihanov, *Master and Slave: Lukács, Bakhtin and the Ideas of Their Time.*

6. See Bakhtin, *Fransua Rable v istorii realizama*, 42.

7. E.g. his use, and that of his associate Shiller, of the term "fantastic realism," and Lukács' *K istorii realizma* (Bakhtin, *Fransua Rable*, 33, 42, resp.).

8. Mikhail Ryklin, for example, states in his "Tela terrora (tezisy k logike nasiliia)" that the Rabelais book "was written in 1935–1936" (p. 62).

9. See Willi Bredel, "Vor neuen, grossern Aufgaben. Einige Fragen der neuen Orientierung in der antifascistischen Kulturpolitik," *Deutsche Zentral-Zeitung*, October 26, 1935. Note: Bredel cites as authoritative for this position both the Paris Congress and Dimitrov's address to the Seventh Congress of the Comintern.

10. See Alfred Kurella, "Sowjet-Humanismus."

11. V. Turbin has claimed that Bakhtin told him the Rabelais book could have appeared in 1933 had there not been so many obstacles to publishing it (a claim doubted by Sergei Bocharov, Bakhtin's literary executor in my conversation with him of 6/23/1999.). See Turbin, "Karnaval: religiia, politika, teosofiia," 9.

12. The fact that the first chapter of the dissertation contains only one reference to carnival, and that not initially, suggests the possibility that the work was written in stages.

13. It was not actually politically perilous at this time to work on Goethe since many articles in the Soviet cultural press pointed out how much the nazis in Germany were bowdlerizing Goethe and excluding much of his oeuvre from publication or commentary.

14. Another indication that corroborates the fact that Rabelais was being promoted officially in the mid thirties would be an item, "Deviatyi tom 'Literaturnoi Entsiklopedii'," that appeared in *Vecherniaia Moskva* January 23, 1935 announcing the imminent appearance of the encyclopedia's ninth volume (covering the letters P-R) and recommending to readers the entries on several important topics, only three of which were writers: Pushkin, Rabelais and Romain Rolland. Moreover, the entry on Rabelais in this ninth volume (covering several pages and copiously illustrated, including two full-page plates) was written by A. A. Smirnov, a Professor at the Institute of West European Literature in Leningrad to whom Bakhtin sent the manuscript of his dissertation in 1940 (Konkin and Konkina 231). In this article, Smirnov foregrounds Rabelais' "humanism" (a banner term of the Popular Front) and use of "grotesque," but there is no mention of "carnival." It will be recalled, moreover, that Bakhtin prepared an arti-

cle on "Satire" for the next, tenth, volume of the Literary Encyclopedia (which never appeared).

15. See also, pp. 7, 28–31. It might also be noted that while Bakhtin covered a great deal of French material in the opening pages of his book as it progressed he discussed more and more German thinkers (Hegel, Schlegel, etc.).

16. Goethe first used the term while describing, in his journal *Uber Kunst and Altertum*, the French response to an adaptation of his *Tasso*. For the twenty brief passages where Goethe deals with this context see the Appendix to Fritz Strich, *Goethe and World Literature*, 349–351.

17. Marx uses the term in "The Communist Manifesto."

18. See also in that volume Allen Wood, "Kant's Project for Perpetual Peace," pp. 25, 59–76.

19. For example, see Wolf Franck, "Fichte als Schriftsteller" and Johann Gottlieb Fichte, "Sprache, Schriftstellerei und Schriftsteller" (extracts from writings including Reden an die deutsche Nation), *Das Wort*, 1939, no 2, pp. 67–75, 75–79, respectively.

20. Cf. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation*, 3, 46–49, 99.

21. Personal communication of Boyarin to James Clifford of October 3, 1993 (quoted in Clifford 248).

22. "Balagan," *O Teatre* (Petersburg, 1913).

23. See Katerina Clark, "Bakhtin's Carnival and the Carnivals of the Stalinist Thirties."

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