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READING DIALOGICALLY:
A BAKHTINIAN APPROACH TO INTERPRETING ELIJAH

A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Biblical Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

By
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January 2011

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To my wife, Erin, who sacrificed much during this project and who is my best friend in life!

Romans 15:6

To my three sons, Micah, Isaiah, and Asher, of whom I am most proud!

May God's Force in Christ always be with You!

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INTRODUCTION

SURVEY OF THE LITERARY AND BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP CONCERNING THE INTERPRETATION OF TEXTUAL CHARACTERS

I. Introduction

“How entangled and stratified are such human relationships as those between David and Absalom, between David and Joab!” wrote Erich Auerbach in 1947!¹ They are, he asserts, “fraught with background.” In *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, Auerbach points to the aesthetic nature of Old Testament narratives, particularly their characterization. He exemplifies the value of a narrative-critical approach at a time when Old Testament studies were dominated by historical-critical methodologies. According to Robert Alter, Auerbach shows “more clearly than anyone before him how the cryptic consciousness of biblical narrative is a reflection of profound art, not primitiveness.”²

In this introduction, we will explore the great debate about the proper interpretation of textual characters within the past century, as well as the presuppositions that led to certain interpretations of textual characters.³ We will also see how narrative-critical approaches have influenced the interpretation of Old Testament characters since Auerbach’s 1947 work. This will set the stage for showing that Mikhail Bakhtin’s dialogic approach is a valuable contribution to

¹ Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (trans. Willard R. Task; Garden City: Doubleday, 1953), 12.

² Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 17.

³ For good overviews of this debate see Baruch Hochman, *Character In Literature* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985); W. J. Harvey, *Character And The Novel* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1965).

the great debate over how to interpret textual characters, specifically the characters found in Old Testament narratives.

II. Realist and Purist Approaches to Textual Characters: Defining the Role of the Reader

A. Introduction

The term *narrative-criticism* is confusing because it can point to a number of different and even conflicting interpretative communities parading together under its label. David Herman explains how narrative criticism has undergone “a sustained, sometimes startling metamorphosis” just in the past thirty years.⁴ This “metamorphosis” is the result of “adapting a host of methodologies and perspectives—feminist, Bakhtinian, deconstructive, reader-response, historicist, rhetorical, film-theoretical, computational, discourse-analytical and (psycho) linguistic.”⁵ For Herman, interpreting a narrative and its characters can be a complex task.

The debates about interpreting textual characters have hinged on what role the reader’s own subjective presuppositions play in interpretation. Many narrative-critical approaches have surfaced in response to the many text-oriented approaches that dominated much of the twentieth century’s literary studies.⁶ Consequently, there has been great debate spanning the last century among a variety of narrative-critical approaches concerning how readers should interpret the aesthetic nature of textual characters; first, because there has been disagreement over *what*

⁴ David Herman, *Narratologies: New Perspectives on Narrative Analysis* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 1.

⁵ Herman, *Narratologies*, 1.

⁶ Stephen Moore, *Literary Criticism and The Gospels: The Theoretical Change*. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), 72–73, writes, “The rediscovery of the reader entails a genuine paradigm shift in literary studies, signifying a full turn of the circle of possible critical emphases. . . . Author, text, reader: with some reduction we can say that literary critics have been preoccupied with each of these moments in turn.” See also Lubomir Dolozel, “Eco and His Model Reader,” *Poetics Today* 1 (1980): 18, who writes, “For the twentieth century. . . [the text] is the prime focus of attention; finally our time has discovered the last, up to now sadly neglected component of literary communication—the reader.”

readers think a textual character is, and second, because there has been disagreement over *how* readers are to interpret whatever they have presupposed a textual character to be.

B. The Realist Perspective of Textual Character

Marvin Mudrick wrote an article in 1961 for the *Yale Review* describing how textual characters had been studied by different interpretive communities. He generalizes a number of different approaches into two opposing perspectives that answer the question, how should a reader interpret a textual character? Mudrick labels these two opposing perspectives the realist perspective and the purist perspective and notes that the realist argument was on the defense in his day.⁷

The realist perspective interprets textual characters as personalities that can be extracted from the narrative text and constructed as images outside of the text, or context of the text, and within the reader's mind.⁸ The realist perspective, Mudrick points out, interprets textual characters in the same way that many people interpret other real people. "Characters acquire, in the course of an action, a kind of independence from the events in which they live," he writes, and "they can be usefully discussed at some distance from their context."⁹ In other words, the realist theory of character encourages readers to use their subjective experience in the same way that real people do when they interpret other real people.¹⁰

⁷ Marvin Mudrick, "Character and Event in Fiction," *Yale Review* 50 (1961): 21.

⁸ Harvey, *Character And The Novel*. Harvey labels this same perspective of textual characters as the "theory of mimesis" and claims that this perspective views characters in literature as "imitations of real people."

⁹ Mudrick, "Character and Event in Fiction," 21.

¹⁰ Hochman, *Character In Literature*, 16, makes this same point of those who advocate a realist perspective described by Mudrick. They speak about characters as though they are really alive and feel free to discuss dimensions of the characters' experience that go "well beyond the boundary of the works in which they appeared."

According to some scholars, a Romantic humanistic interest in the individual influenced such realistic approaches to textual character. This perspective of character had its origins in Germanic humanism, Martin Price argues, which sought to autonomize the individual and objectify its perspective of reality and truth. While this realistic approach to character had its effect on literary studies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Baruch Hochman identifies the “Romantic interest in personality, individuality, and originality” especially to have dominated nineteenth-century narrative-critical studies.¹¹

A.C. Bradley has been recognized as one such realist who studied narrative literature into the turn of the twentieth century. Seymour Chatman points to Bradley’s study of textual character in *Othello* in which Bradley “established an independently coherent view of Iago’s traits.” He then searches “for *motives* to explain Iago’s heinous plot against Othello,” Chatman observes.¹² Bradley considers it an important interpretive task to speculate and infer what he considers to be important aesthetic aspects of Iago’s personality, namely his motives. According to Bradley and other realists of his time, readers should be free to discuss characters’ personalities based on their own experience from the real world by asking questions not necessarily asked or answered by the text alone.¹³

¹¹ Hochman, *Character In Literature*, 16. See also p. 17 where Hochman points out that the New Critical approach’s problem with the realist view of interpreting textual characters is that it makes the mistake of confusing real life and literature and thus contaminates “the pristine quality of the literary artifact with the muck and moil of life.”

¹² Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978), 135.

¹³ Hochman, *Character In Literature*, 16, gives examples of other realistic interpretations that speculate concerning the peculiarities of a Shakespearean characters’ childhood or how many children Lady Macbeth really had.

C. The Purist Perspective of Textual Character

Mudrick labels the view of those who oppose the realist perspective of character the purist perspective. The purist argument opposes the idea that textual characters are imitations of real people and their personalities. Characters “do not exist at all except insofar as they are a part of the images and events which bear and move them,” the purist view argues.¹⁴ In other words, any attempt to extract textual characters from their context or to discuss them as if they were real human beings for the purists was “a sentimental misunderstanding of the nature of literature.”¹⁵

The New Critical School was the first such purist approach during the early twentieth century that opposed the then popular realist approach.¹⁶ G. Wilson Knight, for example, argues that if the reader focused on the characters when reading Shakespearean tragedies, the reader would inevitably distort the plays by introducing “considerations of morality into the works of art that ideally are structures of imagery existing beyond good and evil.”¹⁷ Knight interprets Hamlet as “evil” and Claudius as “good,” not because their characters are portrayed as such, but because he understood a major theme of the play to be the “reversal of values.”¹⁸

¹⁴ Mudrick, “Character and Event in Fiction,” 211.

¹⁵ See Hochman, *Character In Literature*, 16. For the text-centered approaches, such as the New Critics, the Structuralists, and the Formalists, the life of the narrative “lies not in the characters or their lives but in the language of the play and the structure of the imagery.” See page 17 where Hochman calls this position a “prejudice for literature and against life; for literariness and against the personality.”

¹⁶ Hochman, *Character In Literature*, 17, points out that in response to Bradley and others who interpret character in a realistic way, the New Critical approach counters that the confusion of life and literature only contaminates “the pristine quality of the literary artifact with the muck and moil of life.”

¹⁷ According to Hochman, *Character In Literature*, 16, the language and structure of the text was prioritized by New Critics and was seen as an object of study. Knight, for example, said the reader should be concerned with the “vision of life conveyed by the imagery of the work,” which leads the reader to “contemplate the emerging structure of meanings in the play” rather than judge the characters’ ethical natures.

¹⁸ Hochman, *Character In Literature*, 20, points out that Knight’s reading of Shakespearean characters “merely subordinates character to a reading of the thematic patterns of a work, so that character and our reading of it becomes a vehicle for thematic material.”

L.C. Knights also exemplifies the New Critical purist perspective. In *How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth* (1934), Knights responds critically to A.C. Bradley's realist interpretation of characters.¹⁹ For Knights, only the words of the text or the "use of language" should be contemplated when discussing character.²⁰ He identifies the value of character only to be in its contribution to the "language, structure, and imagery" of the play.²¹ "We are faced with this conclusion," Knights writes, "the only profitable approach to Shakespeare is a consideration of his plays as dramatic poems, of his *use of language* to obtain a total complex emotional response."²² Therefore, questioning any biographical issue not reported in the text, such as the motive of Othello or the number of children Lady Macbeth would be "irrelevant."²³

D. Affects of the Purist Approach to Textual Characters

While Mudrick describes the realist perspective as being on the "defense" in his article in 1961, decades later other literary scholars use even stronger language to describe the silencing effect that the purist perspective of character had on the realist perspective among literary studies throughout the twentieth century. In 1983 Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan writes, "Whereas the study of the story's events and the links among them has developed considerably in contemporary

¹⁹ L. C. Knights, *How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth* (New York: New York University Press, 1933), 11, writes, "The bulk of Shakespeare criticism is concerned with his characters, his heroines, his love of Nature or 'philosophy'—with everything in short, except for the words on the page, which it is the main business of the critic to examine."

²⁰ Knights, *How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth*, 27–28, writes, "The habit of regarding Shakespeare's persons as 'friends for life' or, maybe, 'deceased acquaintances,' is responsible for most of the vagaries that serve Shakespearean criticism. . . . It is responsible for all the irrelevant moral and realistic canons which have been applied to Shakespeare's plays, for the sentimentalizing of his heroes and his heroines. And the loss is incalculable. Not only do we lose the necessary aloofness from a work of art . . . but we lose the dramatic pattern and we are inhibited from the full complex response which a play of Shakespeare's can evoke."

²¹ Hochman, *Character in Literature*, 16.

²² Knights, *How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth*, 11. Italics added for emphasis.

²³ Hochman, *Character in Literature*, 16.

poetics, that of character has not.”²⁴ She then laments, “In addition to pronouncements about the death of God, the death of humanism, and the death of tragedy, our century has also heard declarations concerning the death of character.”²⁵

“Character has not fared well in our century,” begins Baruch Hochman in his 1985 survey of character. He agrees with Rimmon-Kenan’s assessment of how the purist approaches affected the study of textual characters, which “flattened” the readers’ senses so that they were unable to view even the most lifelike characters as images of real people.²⁶ Laura Donaldson also views the study of textual characters with great pessimism a decade later. “In contrast to the burgeoning of hypotheses concerning point of view or focalization,” she writes, “the concept of character still remains the most neglected and problematically theorized aspect in narrative.”²⁷

One reason for such a negative outlook on the study of character is that a variety of different and even opposing interpretive communities had now defended the purist approach to character. Hochman writes, “The case against character” had “been made from a great many vantage points.”²⁸ Among narrative-critical scholarship structuralist and post-structuralist approaches oppose the ideas that textual characters are imitations of real people and should be studied or interpreted with a realistic approach.²⁹ In fact, it was the structuralist and

²⁴ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 29.

²⁵ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 29.

²⁶ Hochman, *Character In Literature*, 13, writes, “In the world of action, mass society has flattened our sense of the salience of character and even of its relevance. . . . Over the past fifty years the characters of literature have, in the works of our most innovative writers, often been reduced to schematic angularity, vapid ordinariness, or allegorical inanity.”

²⁷ Laura Donaldson, “Cyborgs, Ciphers, and Sexuality: Re-Theorizing Literary and Biblical Character,” *Semeia* 63 (1993): 81.

²⁸ Hochman, *Character In Literature*, 14.

²⁹ See the first chapter of Hochman’s *Character In Literature*. Structuralist approaches include Russian
(continued next page)

deconstructionist purist approaches that had the biggest impact on minimizing the realist perspective of character throughout the twentieth century.³⁰

We will now turn our attention to these structuralist and deconstructionist purists as well as Seymour Chatman's realist approach proposed concerning the study of textual characters and how their proposals influenced the study of Old Testament characters. While structuralists and deconstructionists both oppose the realist perspective of interpreting textual characters, we will see that what they propose are very different ideas of studying textual characters. Furthermore, we will see how the realist perspective reemerged under the influence of the work of Seymour Chatman and how all of these narrative-critical approaches affected the study of Old Testament characters.

III. Further Debates among Realists and Purists Approaches to Textual Characters

A. Structuralist Approaches to Textual Characters

Even though structuralist and deconstructionist schools fundamentally oppose each other in the way they interpret narratives, both schools of thought, Hochman points out, oppose the realist perspective of interpreting textual characters as the New Critical schools. Structuralist and deconstructionist schools also oppose the realist perspective from much deeper philosophic points of view than the New Critic approaches. They both oppose the realist perspective of character, according to Hochman, by "making a case" against the "values of post-Renaissance individualism and against the disposition to create and interpret character in terms of it."³¹

Formalism and French Structuralism, and post-structuralist approaches include deconstructionist approaches influenced by Marxism and Feminism.

³⁰ Hochman, *Character In Literature*, 14. Both structuralists and deconstructionists, according to Hochman, "joined in the ritual of cannibalization of character."

³¹ Hochman, *Character In Literature*, 14. This view, Hochman writes, is "held by some structuralists and
(continued next page)

Many structuralist schools oppose the humanist view of the individual behind the realist perspective of character on three fronts.³² First, they argued that all art is the result of impersonal forces.³³ Authors do not create anything truly new and original, but simply utilize the neat and ordered systems and building blocks of narrative, which are created by such innate and impersonal forces. Second, because they presuppose that art is created by innate forces, many structuralists deny that the subjective experience of the reader plays any role in interpreting a narrative. Readers then use a certain objective code, or the particular narrative formula, to interpret the narrative structure that they are reading.³⁴ Thus, many structuralists reject the notion of the individual by denying both the subjective experience of the author, who creates literary characters, and the subjective experience of the reader, who interprets them.³⁵

Third, since structuralist schools presuppose objectivity in the creation and in the interpretation of narratives, they also reject the concept of a character as an individual. The stress

many post-structuralists.” It “insists that the ‘privileging’ of character reflects a distorting bourgeois bias that stresses the individuals and their choices rather than the world they live. Rimmon-Kenan also notes the effects of structuralists and post-structuralist against the realistic argument.

³² Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 30. Structuralist approaches, according to Rimmon-Kenan, were committed to an “ideology which ‘decentres’ man and runs counter to the notions of individuality and psychological depth.”

³³ Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1984), 186. “Formalists evolved powerful arguments for conceiving the literary text as a result of impersonal forces at work in the system of language itself.” See also Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 30–31. Many structuralists presuppose that the creation of a narrative text, or any form of art, is the result of impersonal, innate forces, which becomes the foundation for their anti-humanist, anti-individualist view of character. See also Edgar McKnight, *Meaning In Texts: The Historical Shaping Of A Narrative Hermeneutics* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 91, on structuralist presuppositions. He writes, “Structuralism conceives of structure as the prior abstract system of interrelationships from which the content and the function of the elements derive.”

³⁴ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 136, writes, “Under the aegis of structuralism and its formalist progenitors, the endeavour to construct a theory carried connotations of ‘objectivity’, ‘neutrality’, and even ‘scientificity.’”

³⁵ Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 188. The “Formalists’ principle,” according to Clark and Holquist, viewed the text “as the sum of its devices.” The text is, thus, for formalists an objective entity. Creating and interpreting a narrative are objective events in the same way that writing and solving a mathematical equation are objective events.

on forces and systems that “traverse the individual” leads structuralists to “a rejection of a prevalent conception of character in the novel,” Culler explains, and to a notion that character “is a myth.”³⁶ Having rejected the idea of individuality in the creative author and in the subjectivity of the reader, structuralist approaches also reject textual characters as individual personalities. For structuralists, the aesthetic quality of textual characters is to be appreciated in terms of their semiotic relationship to the overall narrative, or the proposed meaning a textual character carries in relationship to the form or structure of the narrative.³⁷

Thus, structuralist approaches, like New Critical approaches, reduce textual characters to the language and imagery of the text. “Like any scientifically oriented discipline,” Rimmon-Kenan writes, “Formalist and structuralist poetics recognizes the methodological necessity of reduction.” Structuralist approaches, however, do not merely reduce textual characters to the language or imagery of the text. They interpret textual characters specifically and exclusively as images or actors of the action or plot of the narrative.³⁸

The Russian Formalists and French Structuralists of the twentieth century, for example, exemplify this reduction of character to action. Vladimir Propp, a Russian formalist who studied Russian fairy tales, concludes that characters are no more than what the fairy tale requires them

³⁶ Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics. Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), 230. See also Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 29. Rimmon-Kenan states that some structuralists “rejected” the “psychological essence” of character. She noted how some structuralists even considered that the “psychological essence” of characters is only a product of a bourgeois ideology. See also Roland Barthes, “Introduction à l’analyse structurale des récits,” *Communications* 8 (1966): 1–27.

³⁷ Harvey, *Character And The Novel*, 11. See also Joel Weisenheimer, “Theory of Character,” *Poetics Today* 1 (1979): 195. Structuralist approaches, Weisenheimer asserts, “dissolves” textual characters so that they “lose their privilege, their central status, and their definition.” Textual characters are interpreted by these approaches, he points out, at most as “patterns of recurrence, motifs which are continually recontextualized in other motifs.”

³⁸ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 34, writes, “Since action seems more easily amenable to the construction of ‘narrative grammars,’ it is convenient to reduce character to action.” See Chatman’s discussion on Aristotle’s impact on structuralist perspectives on character construction in *Story and Discourse*, 108–16.

to do. Propp identifies textual characters as “spheres of action,” and furthermore claims that characters could only perform actions categorized into seven roles: villain, donor, helper, sought after woman and her father, dispatcher, hero, and false hero.³⁹ Although the names of characters from one fairy tale to another change, their actions or functions, he asserts, remain the same. Similarly, French structuralists study character in terms of the action within a narrative.⁴⁰ Characters, or *actants* as A.J. Greimas calls them, are simply conceived of as submitting to one of six acts: sender, object, receiver, helper, subject, or opponent.⁴¹

While these structuralist and formalist purist approaches certainly influenced the way literary characters in general have been interpreted over the past century, they had little effect on how Old Testament characters specifically have been studied. These approaches were influential among literary studies at a time when Old Testament studies were being dominated by historical-critical methodologies.⁴² Although narrative-critical approaches have now achieved credibility as useful for studying interpreting Old Testament narratives and characters in a synchronic way, the structuralist purist approaches have not achieved that same credibility in Old Testament studies. The insistence on pure objectivity in the interpretation process, the denial of the creative role of

³⁹ Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* (2d ed.; Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Publishing, 1968), 20. See also Tzvetan Todorov, “Narrative Men,” in *The Poetics of Prose* (trans. Richard Howard; Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977), 66. This Proppian view of character is exemplified by fellow Russian scholar, Tzvetan Todorov, in his response to the famous quote by writer Henry James concerning his view of character. He writes, “Though James’ theoretical ideal may have been a narrative in which everything is subservient to the psychology of characters, it is difficult to ignore the whole tendency in literature, in which the actions are not there to ‘illustrate’ character but in which, on the contrary, the characters are subservient to the action; where, moreover, the word ‘character’ signifies something altogether different from psychological coherence or the description of idiosyncrasy.”

⁴⁰ Hochman, *Character In Literature*, 23.

⁴¹ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 35.

⁴² Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study of Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1974). This work of Hans Frei encouraged biblical scholars to separate the literary and historical questions and view both as plausible methodologies. As a result, Frei’s
(continued next page)

the author, and the denial of the subjective experience of the reader in interpretation has since lost the ability to persuade much of literary scholarship, including those who study the Old Testament from a narrative-critical perspective.⁴³

J. P. Fokkelman and Jerome Walsh are two biblical scholars considered to be structuralist in their approach to interpreting Old Testament biblical narratives and characters as they have utilized structuralist methodology and vocabulary in their study of Old Testament narrative forms and structures. They both have also exhibited the tendency to interpret Old Testament characters as actors of the action or plot motifs.⁴⁴ However, both Fokkelman and Walsh distinguish their work from pure structuralist analysis because they reject the idea that interpretation is an objective event and they acknowledge the subjective role of the reader.⁴⁵

Beyond these two examples one would be hard pressed to identify other structuralist readings of Old Testament character.⁴⁶ However, although the structuralist and formalist purist approaches have not impacted the study of Old Testament character in a significant way, the

work led many biblical scholars to consider narrative-critical methodologies for studying the Old Testament.

⁴³ See the discussion in Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 138–42. See also Wesley Bergen, *Elisha and the End of Prophetism* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 15–41, who in his deconstructive reading of Elisha, regards even Alter and Sternberg negatively because they are too “author-oriented” as apposed to authors such as Donna Fewell, David Gunn, J. Cheryl Exum, and Mieke Bal (to name a few), who give the power of interpreting a narrative text to the reader.

⁴⁴ J. P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 78–96. Fokkelman examines the “lack” of the given “hero” in certain biblical texts—terms that are particular to the structuralist approach. See also Jerome T. Walsh and David W. Cotter, *I Kings* (Berit Olam, Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1996), 233–35. Walsh speaks about Elijah in terms of plot motifs such as “life” vs. “death.”

⁴⁵ Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative*, 20–23. Fokkelman writes, “As there are always new readers with every different intellectual capacities, the meaning which they confer on the text constantly change too. In this way you might even say that a text does not remain the same throughout the ages, but being a living (i.e. read) text, itself also constantly changes.” Walsh, *I Kings*, xxi. See how Walsh acknowledges the experience of the reader in conjecturing “character traits to explain” their actions.

⁴⁶ The same can not be said for New Testament studies. See for instance the work of Daniel Patte, *Structural Exegesis for New Testament Critics* (GBS; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989).

deconstructive purist approaches have had a great influence on how Old Testament characters have been interpreted. We will now examine deconstructive approaches to interpreting textual characters and their influence on interpreting Old Testament characters.

B. Deconstructive Approaches to Textual Characters

Post-structuralist purist approaches to character are represented by interpretive communities that advocate deconstructive philosophies and presuppositions. Like the structuralist purist approaches, deconstructive approaches propose a similar anti-humanist view of the individual. They also reject the notion that literary characters are imitations of real people and personalities. However, while deconstructive approaches oppose the realist perspective of textual characters, they also oppose the structuralist notions that the creation of a narrative is constrained by impersonal forces, and that the interpretation of a narrative text is an objective event.⁴⁷ Deconstructive approaches presuppose that textual characters are the *product* of an author, constrained not by impersonal forces, but rather by the author's power interested ideology.⁴⁸

One can not begin to interpret textual characters, according to deconstructionists, or speak about them as *individuals*, or as *personalities*, objectified from the ideologically driven power interests (social, political, cultural, or religious) of the author. "Power," Danna Nolan Fewell and David Gunn write, "exists on a continuum," and "power relations are multiform and always in

⁴⁷ Jane P. Tompkins, "An Introduction to Reader-Response Criticism," in *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism To Post-Structuralism* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1980), x. As Jane Tompkins acknowledged, such, "reader-oriented" methodologies seek "first to erode and then to destroy the objective text" as they attempt to "redefine the aims and methods of literary study."

⁴⁸ Martin Price, *Forms of Life: Character and Moral Imagination in the Novel* (New Hampshire: Yale University Press, 1983), 49. Instead of stressing impersonal forces that "traverse the individual," deconstructive approaches stress a personal and individual "will to power," or power interested ideology, Price pointed out, that they believe constrains the author.

process” in the writing of literature.⁴⁹ Interpreting textual characters apart from the power interest of the author, from a deconstructive perspective, reflects a prioritizing of an *individual ideology* that represents one particular social-political or religious class.⁵⁰ Deconstructionists do not deny the existence of the character as an individual, but rather redefine what it means for a character to be an individual based on a suspicion that the author has a personal power interest that *he* wishes to have influence in *his* socio-economic or religious culture.⁵¹

Consequently, deconstructive interpretive approaches presuppose that texts, authors, and characters must be deconstructed, or “unmasked” so that the author’s power interest may be revealed and attention given to the “silent” voices of the narrative text.⁵² Instead of reducing characters to images of ideals such as “good” or “evil,” or to agents of action and plot motifs, deconstructive approaches minimize the Romantic and humanistic view of the individual by proposing that textual characters reduce to imitations of ideologies created by the ideologically driven author. As a result, deconstructive purist approaches move attention away from interpreting the characters of the narrative world and redirect the reader’s attention exclusively to

⁴⁹ Danna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn, *Gender, Power, and Promise* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 15.

⁵⁰ According to Marxism, this would be a socio-economic driven ideology from a bourgeois perspective, for a feminist, it would be a gender driven ideology from a male-dominated, patriarchal perspective.

⁵¹ Price, *Forms of Life*, 49. Price notes that Ricour called this kind of interpretation “an exercise of suspicion.” There is a “suspicion” of the author’s ideology to exert his power over a social or religious class. Deconstructionism has been exemplified by the philosophies of Nietzsche, Marx, Freud, Lyotard, and feminist presuppositions. See also Fewell and Gunn, *Gender, Power, and Promise*, 15. “This understanding of power has implications for our understanding of the social order we are exploring in Genesis–Kings,” they write, “which is often termed *patriarchy*.”

⁵² See Fewell and Gunn, *Gender, Power, and Promise*, 18, 24. “We take seriously God’s function as a character in the story,” Fewell and Gunn write. Yet, their interpretation of God as character they acknowledge, is constrained by the notion that God, “as a male character” is “a key manifestation of a male” author. God commands humans to “rule, subjugate, and subdue” his creation, and by doing so exhibits the language of “totalitarian power.” See also Alan J Hauser and Russell Gregory, *From Carmel to Horeb: Elijah in Crisis* (England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 94. Gregory, in “Irony and the Unmasking of Elijah,” writes, “For reasons that will soon be evident, the story under scrutiny unmasks a disingenuous Elijah by means of a carefully crafted ironic presentation.”

the assumed power interest ideology of the author. Feminist deconstructive readings, for example, presuppose a patriarchal, male-dominated, female-oppressed ideology of certain authors or narrators. Biblical authors and narrators are often targets of such deconstructive readings because they are assumed to have a gender or socio-religious *will to power*.

Fewell and Gunn offer such a feminist approach to Old Testament characters in *Gender, Power, and Promise* (1993). In this work, Fewell and Gunn acknowledge that their feminist deconstructive interpretation reads in a way that goes “looking for women” because they assume that the Old Testament narratives were written by men and directed only toward “adult male heads of households.”⁵³ Gunn and Fewell interpret “The Fall” narrative as propaganda by a male author who desired to influence society in valuing humanity on the basis of gender. Unmasking the power interest of the male author and allowing Eve’s “silent” voice to speak shows her not to be disobedient for eating from the forbidden tree as the “male character God” says she is, but rather courageous and seeking wisdom.⁵⁴ Thus, Gunn and Fewell seek to *unmask* the biblical author’s patriarchal power interest and bring a voice to the silent Eve of the text.

In a similar way, Alice Bach suggests “a mode of reading” in which the reader “imagines the biblical narrator as a storyteller with whom the reader must contend.”⁵⁵ Acknowledging that she approaches the David and Bathsheba narratives with feminist presuppositions, Bach writes, “A continuing concern of mine has been to find a method for retrieving the female character who

⁵³ Fewell and Gunn, *Gender, Power, and Promise*, 13,18.

⁵⁴ Fewell and Gunn, *Gender, Power, and Promise*, 30, 38. They write, “The woman reaches for sustenance, beauty, and wisdom. And for doing so she is blamed, both within the text and by countless generations of biblical interpreters in the text’s afterlife.” They later write, “Though Eve’s behavior is condemned by God and berated by centuries of readers, she emerges as a character with initiative and courage.”

⁵⁵ Alice Bach, “Signs of the Flesh: Observations On Characterization in the Bible” *Semeia* 63 (1993): 62. Like Fewell and Gunn, Bach seeks to *unmask* the subduing male interested ideology of the biblical narrator and bring a voice to the silent or “flattened” women of the text.

may have been flattened or suppressed by the weight of the story that is not hers.”⁵⁶ Bathsheba, she argues, is portrayed by the biblical narrator as an object of male lust for the pleasure of male readers. The “suspicious” and “irritable” reader is compelled to look away from where the narrator and David are looking, and instead look to the “fictive landscape to pick up clues about the story” that the narrator is not telling. Such a reader is able to question the story told through the narrator’s fixed glaze” and “cast a cold eye” at the “authoritative overlooking narrator,” who allows Bathsheba’s character to merely be “transformed from sexual object to Queen Mother.”⁵⁷

Unlike the structuralist purist perspectives of character, the post-structuralist deconstructive purists have had a great influence on the interpretation of Old Testament characters.⁵⁸ In addition to the examples of feminist readings by Gunn, Fewell, and Bach, other types of deconstructive readings have gained interest among biblical scholars. Paul Kissling, for example states, “In traditional exegesis, heroes such as Moses and Elijah are unquestioningly deemed to be the vehicle for communicating the narratological point of view.” Therefore, Kissling offers his deconstructive response to traditional exegesis by seeking to “problematize” the “heroes” of the Old Testament.⁵⁹ Kissling and other deconstructive readings have tried to persuade biblical

⁵⁶ Bach, “Signs of the Flesh,” 75. Bach problematizes the fact that Bathsheba is not allowed to talk or react with David to the news that she is pregnant with his child. She writes, “In a narration that reveals nothing of the woman’s response to the king, her silence reinforces the power relationship between the king and a woman brought to his bed. A male viewer might well share in the narrator’s voyeuristic pleasure in this scene, picturing the woman as an enigma, as other, viewed as outside of male language, in which deals are cut.”

⁵⁷ Bach, “Signs of the Flesh,” 76–77. Bach points out that Bathsheba told David he had made a vow to make Solomon king, but such a “vow” was not recorded in the narrative so the reader is to imply that David did not make such a vow. Thus, Bathsheba, Bach writes, is seen as exerting her authority in ruling over the monarchy. She has the power, not David.

⁵⁸ Mieke Bal, *On Story-Telling: Essays In Narratology* (ed. David Jobling; Sonoma, Calif.: Polebridge, 1991), 62. In her survey of how narrative-critical theory has been applied to biblical narratives, Bal argues how such deconstructive-feminist readings of Old Testament narratives “have been so extremely influential.”

⁵⁹ Paul Kissling, *Reliable Characters In the Primary History: Profiles of Moses, Joshua, Elijah, and Elisha* (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 16.

scholarship that Old Testament characters, such as Moses and Elijah are to be interpreted, or deconstructed, as problematic, power hungry, self-seeking personalities.⁶⁰

While purist approaches to textual characters have had a profound impact on literary studies for much of the twentieth century, and while the deconstructive purist approaches still remain influential in many literary studies of character today, a number of literary scholars have grown dissatisfied with the purist assumptions regarding character during the mid to late 1970s and into the 1990s. Rimmon-Kenan, for example, questioned whether a “non-humanist ideology” should lead us to ignore the realistic way that many textual characters are portrayed.⁶¹ Wallace Martin also argued that those who oppose the realistic approaches have failed in providing “an adequate account” of the reader’s experience when reading narrative characters.⁶²

C. Seymour Chatman’s Call for a “More Open” Approach to Textual Characters

Seymour Chatman and his work, *Story and Discourse* (1975) had perhaps the most influence in persuading literary scholarship of the plausibility of a realistic approach to interpreting textual characters.⁶³ His approach to interpreting narratives and textual characters was influenced both by structuralism and by Wolfgang Iser’s work, which showed the active role

⁶⁰ See Ilana Pardes, *Countertraditions in the Bible: A Feminist Approach* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992). Pardes uses Exodus 4:24–26 to lessen the character of Moses and accentuate the silent voice of Zipporah. See Phyllis Trible, “Exegesis For Storytellers and Other Strangers,” in *JBL* 114 (Spring 1995): 6. Here Trible deconstructs the “Israelites storytellers” who “have used Jezebel’s own people to undermine her and exalt Elijah. See also Phyllis Trible, *God and Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978).; and Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984).

⁶¹ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 31.

⁶² Martin, “Narrative Structure,” 119. Hochman, *Character in Literature*, 58. Unless we want to reduce characters “to minimal functions or archaeological curiosities,” Hochman wrote, “we must have some way of talking about them.”

⁶³ Wallace Martin credits both Seymour Chatman and Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan with trying to “free the concept of character” from the formalist and structuralist “limitations.” See Wallace Martin, *Recent Theories of Narrative* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1986), 120.

of a reader in interpreting a narrative text.⁶⁴ Thus, his approach represented a hybrid of structuralist and reader-response presuppositions, which represented the importance of identifying narrative structures, but also acknowledged the role that the reader's subjective experience does play in interpretation.⁶⁵

To deny any realistic interpretation of a textual character, Chatman wrote, is "to deny an absolutely fundamental aesthetic experience."⁶⁶ Interpreting textual characters "require terms for description," he added, and there is "no point in rejecting those out of the general vocabulary of psychology, morality, and any other relevant area of *human experience*."⁶⁷ If, for example, "a character is constantly washing his hands, mopping already clean floors, picking up motes of dust off the furniture, the audience," Chatman pointed out, "is obliged to read out a trait like 'compulsive.'"⁶⁸ Labeling such a character as "compulsive" is a natural aesthetic experience of the reader, and this response is a result of the reader knowing what "compulsive" means from his or her own life experience, not because the words of the text tell the reader to interpret a character in such a way.

Chatman offered other examples of questions that highlight the aesthetic experience of the reader. He wrote,

⁶⁴ Chatman's acknowledgment of the reader's experience in interpreting character was influenced by Wolfgang Iser's phenomenological approach. See Chatman's footnote and credit given to Iser page 119. See also Chatman's first chapter in *Story and Discourse*, where he shows the influence that Structuralism has on his methodology.

⁶⁵ Bary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 19, label Chatman's approach as "narratological."

⁶⁶ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 138. After we have read a narrative text, Chatman pointed out, we often "recall fictional characters vividly, yet not a single word of the text in which they came alive."

⁶⁷ Ibid. "We endow characters" with *personality*, Chatman explained, "only to the extent that "*personality* is a structure familiar to us in life and art."

⁶⁸ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 122.

How about “Is Lady Macbeth a good mother and if so, in what sense of the word ‘good,’” Or, “What is there in her character to explain her bloodthirsty ambition, yet relative lack of staying power once the battle is joined?” Or about Hamlet: “What sort of student was he? What is the relation between his scholarly interests and his general temperament?”⁶⁹

In other words, like A.C. Bradley and other realists, Chatman argued that the reader’s natural experience of reading and interpreting textual characters leads a reader to ask questions, infer, and speculate concerning the “openness” of textual characters and about issues pertaining to their “personality” that are not necessarily highlighted by the text. These questions and speculations are a part of the natural experience of understanding a written text in the same way that it is in understanding a real person.⁷⁰

Furthermore, readers are led to interpret textual characters in a realistic and aesthetic way, Chatman argued, because many textual characters have been created in a way that encourages the reader to do so. Textual characters are often created by the author in a way that leaves aspects of their personality to be a mystery. Many textual characters are not able to simply reduce to an image, Chatman pointed out, but rather they “remain open constructs, just as some people in the real world stay mysteries no matter how well we know them.”⁷¹ While textual characters are not

⁶⁹ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 117, argues against the common sentiment of the text-oriented purists that a character could only be spoken of with the words of the text. He asked the question, “But because one question is idle, does it mean that *all* questions concerning characters are idle?”

⁷⁰ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 117, writes, “In short, should we restrain what seems a God-given right to infer and even speculate about characters if we like? Any such restraint strikes me as an impoverishment of aesthetic experience.” Chatman is drawn to Wolfgang Iser’s phenomenological approach that argues the subjective experience of the reader is important when interpreting any text. Chatman footnotes Iser’s work to defend the importance of the reader’s experience in interpreting textual characters. See Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore, Md.: John Hopkins University Press, 1974), 283. Iser writes, “While reading *Tom Jones*, they may never have had a clear conception of what a hero actually looks like, but on seeing the film, some may say, ‘That’s not how I imagined him.’ The point here is that the reader of *Tom Jones* is able to visualize the hero virtually for himself, and so his imagination senses the vast number of possibilities.”

⁷¹ See Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 118. See also Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 33. Rimmon-Kenan also argued that although characters “are by no means human beings in the literal sense of the word, they are partly (continued next page)

“alive,” he argued that many textual characters are created to be “more or less lifelike.”⁷²

Therefore, Chatman called for a “viable” approach to character that preserved “openness and treat characters as autonomous beings.”⁷³

Readers use their subjective experience from their real world to interpret textual characters, according to Chatman, by interpreting what characters are “like,” where “like” implies that a character’s personality is “open-ended,” and “subject to further speculations, enrichments, visions and revisions.”⁷⁴ The reader constructs a “paradigm of traits” for each character, he explained, based his or her life experience. The reader may interpret a character as being “shy” or “jealous” because he or she has experienced what “shyness” or “jealousy” is “like.”⁷⁵ Chatman’s approach encouraged readers to interpret textual characters in a realistic way, as carriers of traits formulated in their minds from what they have known and experienced from the real world.

Chatman’s work greatly influenced the interpretation of Old Testament characters.⁷⁶ A number of biblical scholars interpreted Old Testament narratives and characters in a way that was patterned after his approach. Meir Sternberg, Robert Alter, Adele Berlin, and Shimon Bar-Efrat produced the most popular of these approaches that explored how to interpret what Old

modeled on the reader’s conception of people and in this they are people-like.”

⁷² Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 138.

⁷³ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 119.

⁷⁴ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 119.

⁷⁵ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 121–25. See Chatman’s discussion on defining a trait. Chatman turns to the ideas of J.P. Guilford, believing that his psychological definition of “trait” is most useful. Thus, he defines a “trait” as “any distinguishable, relatively enduring way in which one individual differs from another.” (p.121) See J. P. Guilford, *Personality* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), as quoted in E. L. Kelly, *Assessment of Human Characteristics* (Belmont, Calif., 1967), 15.

⁷⁶ W. Lee Humphries, *The Character of God In The Book of Genesis* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 7, notes how the works of scholars such as Robert Alter “renewed attention to character and characterization” and caused a “recent flourish” of realistic studies of Old Testament characters.

Testament characters are “like” by describing them in terms of personality traits.⁷⁷ Yet, while Chatman’s work satisfied the desire among those who scholars who desired a more “open” theory and approach to character than the purists proposed, his “paradigm of traits” approach for interpreting textual character oversimplifies his own assertion that textual characters are to be interpreted as “open constructs.”⁷⁸ Since Chatman’s character theory proposes a realistic approach, one must ask if real people are simply carrier of traits, and also if real people properly interpret what other real people are “like” by simply building “paradigm of traits” for them.

If I label another person as “shy” because of my experience with that person, does that mean that I have interpreted what that person is *like*, or *rather* what *I think he or she is like*? Furthermore, if I define a person based only what I think they are like, as a carrier of certain traits, then have I allowed that person to remain as an “open” personality? Have I not made that person a fixed image of my mind? Defining a textual character as a “paradigm of traits” may not reduce a character to fixed images of the text, but it does reduce a textual character to a fixed image—a fixed image of the reader’s mind. Chatman’s theory that textual characters are carriers of traits does not explore how such traits are relative to the changing circumstances and relationships that real people and textual characters encounter. People who act in a “shy” or

⁷⁷ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981); Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1985); Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1994); Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art In The Bible* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989). See also the New Testament works by Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew As Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); Mark Allen Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990).

⁷⁸ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 119. Chatman himself acknowledged that his proposal of interpreting what a textual personality “is like” is “unsophisticated.”

“jealous” way are not statically “shy” or “jealous,” but rather act in such a way toward particular people and under particular circumstances.⁷⁹

Thus, while Chatman has contributed to a more “open” or realistic study of textual characters, his work, like the purists approaches have left a void in the task of interpreting real people and textual characters. We will now introduce the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, and then examine how his dialogic approach to interpreting textual characters fills the voids left by Chatman and others in interpreting textual characters as truly “open” personalities.

IV. Mikhail Bakhtin’s Dialogic Approach to Textual Characters

A. Introduction: Bakhtin’s Metalinguistic Approach to interpreting Dialogue

The debate concerning what a textual character is, and how a reader participates in interpreting textual characters continues today.⁸⁰ In the midst of this debate stands Mikhail Bakhtin’s dialogic approach, which offers a unique perspective to the issues concerning the interpretation of textual characters. Bakhtin was a Russian literary scholar who lived from 1895–1975.⁸¹ Much of his written work was unknown to the Western world until the 1970s and 1980s

⁷⁹ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 126. Thus, even though Chatman acknowledges the possibility of a trait changing or being replaced by other traits, his definition of a trait as a “relatively stable or abiding personality quality,” conflicts with the idea of a real person or a textual character remaining “open.”

⁸⁰ Herman, *Narratologies*, 1. Herman offered a “genealogy” of the “plurality of models for narrative analysis. See Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 149. This second edition celebrates the twentieth anniversary of her 1983 work. In this edition Rimmon-Kenan added a final chapter acknowledging the variety of competing “Narratologies” and suggesting an attitude toward interpreting narrative that is an “ever-changing, open-ended creative process—indeed a perpetual ‘toward.’”

⁸¹ See Michael Holquist, introduction to *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin* (ed. Michael Holquist; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), xvi. Holquist notes that Bakhtin was trained as a “classicist during a period when the German model of philology dominated Russian Universities.” Thus, much of his linguistic thought is situated in response to or in light of this German linguistic tradition.

because he suffered from bad health and spent much of his life in exile under Joseph Stalin's rule.⁸²

Since the translation and publication of much of his work, Bakhtin's dialogic approach to interpreting literature has become an interest to literary scholarship and beyond. Tzvetan Todorov hailed Bakhtin as "the most important Soviet thinker in the human sciences and the greatest theoretician of literature in the twentieth century."⁸³ Wayne Booth claimed that Bakhtin's work should be seen as more than just another "piece of 'literary criticism,'" and more than just another "study of fictional technique or form." Bakhtin's "ultimate value," Booth claimed, is found in his insights in to how people participate in dialogue, or what Bakhtin called *dialogic discourse*.⁸⁴

"Life by its very nature," Bakhtin wrote, "is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue."⁸⁵ Bakhtin was fascinated with the complexities of dialogic discourse, particularly what he called the *dialogic relationships* that occur in a dialogue.⁸⁶ Dialogic relationships exceed

⁸² For a good biography on Bakhtin see Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1984).

⁸³ Michael Holquist, introduction to *Speech Genres and Other Essays* (ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist; trans. Vern W. McGee; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), xxii2.

⁸⁴ Wayne Booth, introduction to *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, by Mikhail Bakhtin (*Theory and History of Literature* 8, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxv. See also Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 148. In 2002 she added a final chapter in which she considered the last twenty years of narrative-critical theory and how it may develop into the future. In this chapter, she noted the importance of Bakhtin's work on helping her to develop a narratology that is more "open, dynamic, and never ending." However, she does not go into much detail as to what this means.

⁸⁵ Mikhail M. Bakhtin, "Toward a Reworking of the Dostoevsky's Book," in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (*Theory and History of Literature* 8, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 293. The essay, "Toward a Reworking of Dostoevsky" appeared in 1961 and was not originally part of *Problemy poetiki Dostoevskogo*. People invest themselves in dialogue, which then "enters into the dialogic fabric of human life" and "into the world symposium," Bakhtin wrote. The result of this "entering into" the dialogic world is that speech discourses exist in constant relationship to people and other discourses outside of itself. These relationships, Bakhtin labeled as *dialogic relationships*.

⁸⁶ Bakhtin, "Toward a Reworking," 293.

the linguistic relationships of the words within the discourse. They are the relationships that are created between a spoken discourse and entities outside of the spoken discourse, such as the speaker, the hearer, and other related discourses that have already been spoken.⁸⁷

According to Bakhtin, the dialogic relationships of a discourse must be recognized and properly studied if one is to truly understand and value the complexities and artistic nature of dialogue, and likewise, the complexities of the textual characters that are depicted as imitations of real people through their dialogues with others. Traditional linguistic approaches are incapable of studying the complexities of speech communication because dialogic relationships are not linguistic phenomena, but rather *extralinguistic* phenomena that need to be studied with *metalinguistic* analysis.⁸⁸ Therefore, linguistics, Bakhtin wrote “must utilize the results of metalinguistics,” because only metalinguistic analysis studies the relationships that words acquire outside of spoken or written discourse.⁸⁹

B. Bakhtin’s Dialogic Approach to Narrative Discourse and Textual Characters

Bakhtin was fascinated with how literary discourses create dialogue, and how often times literary discourses imitate the complex nature or real life dialogue. He was, thus, also interested in studying how textual characters are portrayed through how they participate in dialogue with each other, with the author, and even with the reader.⁹⁰ Some narratives imitate the dialogic

⁸⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, 89, writes, “The unique speech experience of each individual is shaped and developed in continuous and constant interaction,” with others and with others’ individual speech discourses. All of our words are also, according to Bakhtin, “filled” with other peoples’ already spoken words. The words we choose to speak are not our own words, but the words already spoken by other people. Therefore, no speech discourse exists without a *dialogic relationship* to another person and to other already spoken speech discourses.

⁸⁸ Bakhtin, *Problems in Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 183. Will explain what Bakhtin means by this in Chapter 1.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ See Bakhtin’s four essays in Holquist, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*. Bakhtin
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discourse of real life dialogue better than other narratives, Bakhtin observed. The modern novel, for him, was the best example of literature imitating dialogic discourse. He labeled the literary dialogic discourse, as found in novels, *novelistic discourse*.

According to Bakhtin, there had been little attention given to indentifying and studying the stylistics particular to novelistic discourse until the 1920's.⁹¹ Surveys of the novel then began to examine the novel and novelistic literature with stylistic categories formed on the basis of reading poetic literature.⁹² Many of these surveys viewed the novel as a fallen state of literary genre because of its open-endedness and lack of finalized meaning.⁹³ Many scholars also regarded dialogue or novelistic discourse to lack an artistic value because it did not have a poetic formulation or structure.⁹⁴

“The differences between the novel and all other genres,” however “are so fundamental” Bakhtin wrote, that attempts to impose the concepts of poetic imagery on the novel are “doomed

developed much of his theory of dialogue, or *dialogic discourse* by studying the speech discourses of authors and textual characters in many literary works. Bakhtin's range of reading literary texts and analyzing literary characters is amazing. He studied and compared the characters and literary discourses of canonical favorites such as *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad*, to *Don Quixote* and *Tom Jones*, and Edgar Allen Poe's *The Cask of Amontillado*, to his favorite works written by Dostoevsky.

⁹¹ See Mikhail Bakhtin, “From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse,” in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin* (trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 42. Bakhtin argued that “Classicism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries did not recognize the novel as an independent poetic genre and classified it with mixed rhetorical genres.” The first “theoreticians” of the novel were the Romantics, like Friedrich Schlegel, however, according to Bakhtin, they “barely touched on questions of style.”

⁹² See Bakhtin, “From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse,” 43. Influenced by traditional linguistic approaches, these surveys studied the literary and artistic features of language and genre in terms of its semiotic and poetic structure. By “poetic,” Bakhtin did not mean lyrical discourse only as found in poetry, but rather narratives that are designed with a unifying structure and imagery.

⁹³ Holquist, introduction to *The Dialogic Imagination*, xxxii. Holquist names Lucak and Derrida as examples of scholars who have viewed the novel as a “fallen” literary genre.

⁹⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin* (trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 260. He wrote, “There is a highly characteristic and widespread point of view that sees novelistic discourse as an extra-artistic medium. . . . After failure to find in novelistic discourse a purely poetic formulation (“poetic” in the narrow sense) as we expected, prose discourse is denied any artistic value at all; it is the same as practical speech for everyday life, or speech for
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to fail.”⁹⁵ Even the surveys of the novel in the 1920’s, according to him, had left the distinctive features of novelistic discourse “unexplored.”⁹⁶ Therefore, Bakhtin responded to these surveys in his essays *Epic and Novel* and *From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse* with explanations of what distinguishes novelistic discourse from more poetic forms of literary discourse.⁹⁷ He traced the development of novelistic discourse from its rudimentary beginnings in the more ancient literary genres to its purest forms in the modern novel.⁹⁸

Novelistic discourse did not first appear or only exist in the modern novel, according to Bakhtin, but rather it evolved over the centuries.⁹⁹ Novelistic discourse is shown to be dialogic by the relationships it creates among the author, the characters, and the readers. The author, he pointed out, allows the characters to imitate real life dialogue with other characters, and thereby, remain open and unfixed personalities in the same way that people remain open and unfixed.

scientific purposes, and artistically neutral means of communication.”

⁹⁵ Bakhtin, “From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse,” 43.

⁹⁶ Bakhtin, “From a Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse,” 42. Of special value, Bakhtin wrote, is “the work by H. Hatzfeld, *Don-Quijote als Wortkunstwerk* (Leipzig-Berlin, 1927).”

⁹⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Epic and Novel,” in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin* (trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 6–7. See how Bakhtin defines the marks of “novelization,” instead of merely the novel as a specific genre. The reason for his obscure reading list is that Bakhtin was more concerned with tracing the development of dialogic discourse in written literature, or what he called *novelistic discourse*, than he was analyzing and comparing great literary genres.

⁹⁸ See Holquist, introduction to *The Dialogic Imagination*, xvi. Holquist cautions that anyone who reads Bakhtin must confront his “unfamiliar shadings” of Western European cultural history and literature. He barely mentions Shakespeare, and instead is often preoccupied with centuries of literature that are ignored by most other literary scholars. He focused attention on a peculiar school of grammarians at Toulouse in the seventh century A.D. and continually gives attention to the Carolingian Revival and the “interstitial periods between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.” When he does consider a more familiar time period of literature, Bakhtin often cites obscure literary works and authors. When Bakhtin studied Greek literature, for example, he focuses on Pignes of Halicarnassus and Ion of Chios.

⁹⁹ Holquist, “From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse,” 50. Novelistic discourse, according to Bakhtin, “has a lengthy prehistory, going back centuries, even thousands of years.” See also Holquist, introduction to *The Dialogic Imagination*, xxxi. For Bakhtin, Dostoevsky’s works are only an accumulation of what has always been made implicit in other literary genres of the past.

Characters represent a point of view more than a personality trait or function of plot.¹⁰⁰ Novelistic discourse is also dialogic because it invites the reader into an open-ended dialogue concerning the unfinished quality of the characters and narrative world. This open-ended quality creates a “contemporary reality” with the reader and his or her experience in the real world, which is also unfinished and still evolving.¹⁰¹

Bakhtin’s essays on the novel and novelistic discourse are less about comparing literary genres, and more about his interest in the development of dialogue in literary art. The novel, according to Bakhtin, was not a fallen literary genre, but rather a style of literary discourse resists the rules and structures of genre.¹⁰² Novelistic discourse is artistic, he argued, not because it can be understood or categorized by some poetic design or some neat fixed structure, but rather because it imitates the *ordinary* and *everyday* expressions of people in dialogue with each other.¹⁰³

Bakhtin’s focus on the dialogic relationships in novelistic discourse distinguishes his approach from other approaches of interpreting narrative texts and textual characters that have

¹⁰⁰ Bakhtin, “From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse,” 50. Novelistic discourse, Bakhtin asserted, allows the characters to represent “a diversity of social speech types” and “a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized.” He recognized indirect discourse as a mark of novelistic discourse. He explained, “Indirect discourse . . . the representation of another’s word, another’s language in intonational quotation marks, was known in the most ancient of times.” See also Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” 262.

¹⁰¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Epic and Novel,” in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin* (trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 7. The novel has a “specific impulse to continue (what will happen next?),” Bakhtin noted, as opposed to other literary genres that are constrained by the “impulse to end (how will it end?).”

¹⁰² Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, xxxi. The “novel,” Holquist points out, is the name Bakhtin gives to the particular “force at work within a given literary system to reveal the limits, the artificial constraints of that system.” Holquist continues, “Literary systems are comprised of canons, and ‘novelization’ is fundamentally anticanonical.”

¹⁰³ Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” 260. Bakhtin saw every ordinary day as “a sphere of constant activity, the source of all social change and individual creativity. The prosaic is the truly interesting and the ordinary is what is truly noteworthy.” See also Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 36, who point out that “prosaics assuredly does not deny that order may exist, only that it may be presumed to exist behind every apparently messy event . . . of everyday life.”

been influenced by traditional linguistic approaches.¹⁰⁴ The “basic tasks” for a stylistics used for studying novelistic discourse and its textual characters, he asserted, must consider the metalinguistic phenomena of dialogue – the “transfers and switchings of languages and voices,” and their “dialogic relationships.”¹⁰⁵ The textual characters depicted with novelistic discourses, thus, should not be reduced to mere images of the text or even finalized images in the reader’s mind, but rather interpreted as speakers of their own point of view in dialogue with other characters and their point of views.¹⁰⁶

D. Applying Bakhtin to the Study of Old Testament Characters

Since Bakhtin applied his dialogic approach primarily to the study of novels, such as Dostoevsky’s works, one may question how plausible or profitable it is to apply his approach to the study of ancient literary discourses and their textual characters such as found in Old Testament narratives.¹⁰⁷ The legitimacy of applying Bakhtin’s dialogic approach to interpreting Old Testament narratives and characters lies, first and foremost, in the fact that he intended his

¹⁰⁴ Bakhtin, for example, did more than just recognize categories of direct and indirect discourse. His dialogic approach examined the different styles of direct and indirect discourse and the dialogic relationships that are shaped, and either strengthen or weaken because of the particular usage of these speech styles.

¹⁰⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, “From a Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse,” in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* by M.M. Bakhtin (trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 50.

¹⁰⁶ See Morson and Emerson, *A Creation of a Prosaics*, 9. Dostoevsky, Bakhtin argued, produced the purest form of the novel by creating a plurality of voices, characters that are “not governed by plot” or “impersonal authorial idea,” but rather depicted as authentic speakers of their own individual word and truth. See also Bakhtin, “Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics,” 265.

¹⁰⁷ Green, Barbara, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship: An Introduction* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 60. Barbara Green, in her survey of how Bakhtin’s approach has been appropriated within Old Testament studies, questions the legitimacy of applying his dialogic approach to Old Testament narratives. She asks, “To what extent can Bakhtin’s ‘Dostoevsky insights’ be brought to bear on Hebrew prose?” In other words, “with what shared assumptions” Green asked, can Bakhtin’s dialogic concepts of speech communication, especially that which takes place between an author and a reader, be applied to the reading of ancient texts such as Old Testament narratives.

approach to be a proposal for a new way of reading all types of literature and discourse styles.¹⁰⁸

Even the more poetic discourses contain dialogue, he argued, and if one is to fully understand the artistic nature and dialogic reality of dialogue, one must “radically reconsider” the traditional stylistics and categories that have been applied to even the more poetic discourses.¹⁰⁹ Once we start thinking dialogically, we will begin to discern important metalinguistic features in other types of literature that have been overlooked, Bakhtin indicated.¹¹⁰

While Bakhtin is not the first literary scholar to study textual characters by focusing on their speech, his dialogic approach called for a new way of interpreting textual characters by acknowledging the metalinguistic phenomena of dialogue. His approach offers the reader a unique way of understanding Old Testament characters in relationships to the author, to the other characters, to the readers, and even to other discourse. It also calls reader to see himself or herself as more than just a reader of a narrative. For Bakhtin, “One must not read for plot, but for the dialogues, and to read the dialogues is to participate in them.”¹¹¹ When reading dialogically,

¹⁰⁸ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 16. Bakhtin did not intend for his approach to merely reveal insights to the dialogic discourse of the novel, Morson and Emerson argue, but rather he sought to “change our approach” to reading “all literary genres.” They also write, “Bakhtin means to offer not just a set of detachable terms, nor even a new set of techniques, but a fundamentally different approach to both language and literary discourses in their entirety.” See also Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship*, 60–61. Bakhtin was more interested in the “novelness” of language, Green writes, than the novel itself. Bakhtin “criticized theorists,” she writes “who did not see deeply enough” the dialogic nature of all types of discourses. Thus, for Green, there “remains no barrier to investigating more hopefully than he did how biblical language can be worked dialogically.”

¹⁰⁹ Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” 266–67. The stylistics advocated by many traditional linguistic approaches are “too narrow and cramped,” Bakhtin wrote to recognize and appreciate the artistic and dialogic nature of any dialogue.

¹¹⁰ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 20. Although Bakhtin never fully worked out the “implications” of applying his dialogic concepts to Old Testament narratives, the development of his ideas in such a “direction,” for Morson and Emerson are a plausible endeavor and “remains to be done.” See also Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship*, 61. The charge that a “modern criticism” is “inappropriate” for the study of an ancient text, for Green “seems moot.” The Old Testament narratives, for her, “are grist for the dialogic mill, with results needing to be evaluated on their terms.”

¹¹¹ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 249.

the reader sees himself or herself in dialogue with the Old Testament authors and characters and with their discourses.

Second, while Old Testament narratives may not possess the same dialogic quality as Dostoevsky's novels, Old Testament narratives do feature dialogic qualities, which when analyzed with metalinguistic study, offers valuable insights for interpreting Old Testament characters.¹¹² Biblical narrators, for example, often speak dialogically *with* their characters, according to David McCracken, by allowing them to speak their own point of view to and in response to other characters.¹¹³ In other words, dialogue “constitutes an unusually large part of biblical narrative,” he writes, “and it often stands on its own, without being dominated by an authorial voice.”¹¹⁴ As a result, many biblical characters are depicted as mere individuals, McCracken writes, but rather “interdividuals” in dialogic relationship to other characters.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Barbara Green, *Mikhail, Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship: An Introduction* (Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), for example, surveys a number the work of a number of biblical scholars who have utilized Bakhtin's dialogic concepts in their reading of Old Testament literature. In addition to her own dialogic interpretation of the character Saul, she offers brief surveys of how Bakhtin's concepts have been applied in Kenneth Craig's readings of Jonah and Esther, in Carol Newsom's readings of Isaiah and Lamentations, in Ilana Pardes' reading of Exodus, and in Robert Polzin's readings of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, and II Samuel. See also Martin J. Buss, “Dialogue in and among Genres,” in *Bakhtin and Genre Theory in Biblical Studies* (ed. Roland Boer; Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature), 3. Boer produced a collection of essays that show how Bakhtin's theory of genre can enhance our study of the bible. Bakhtin's work has mostly been discussed “under the banners” of literary approaches and postmodern approaches, Boer points out. However, this volume is intended to allow Bakhtin's theory of speech genres intersect and meet approaches that have “longer traditions within biblical studies,” specifically Gunkel's theory of Form Criticism. See the recent work of Andre LaCocque, *Esther Regina, A Bakhtinian Reading* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2008), 4. LaCocque attempts to show that the book of Esther “presents undeniable signs of the carnival and that the carnivaleque spirit of its author is quite evident.”

¹¹³ David McCracken, “Character in the Boundary: Bakhtin's Interindividuality in Biblical Narratives,” in *Semeia* 63 (1993): 36. “They have no use for Homeric epithets, and they often withhold evaluation of character and action,” McCracken points out, “even when some evaluation would be welcomed by the reader.”

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* See also Buss, “Dialogue in and among Genres,” 9, who asserts that “one of the most prominent features of biblical literature is dialogue.”

¹¹⁵ McCracken, “Character In The Boundary,” 30. McCracken plays off Bakhtin's concept of “interindividual.”

When reading for the dialogues created by the biblical narrator's discourse, the reader is able to better interpret the complexities of the more dialogic characters. The reader is able to interpret many of the biblical characters as more than just fixed images of plot, more than just a paradigm of personality traits, and more than just deconstructed ideologies. The reader is able to see that biblical narrator often allows biblical characters to remain unfinalized and evolving consciousnesses in dialogue with other characters and with other already spoken discourses. The reader is also able to recognize that he or she is invited to be in dialogue with the point of views many of the Old Testament characters, as well as with the point of view of the biblical author or narrator. As a result, reading these narratives Candice Mandolfo contends "has the potential to become a transformative and dialogic act itself."¹¹⁶

Plan for the Dissertation

In this dissertation, we will examine Bakhtin's dialogic or metalinguistic approach to understanding the dialogic relationships that exist in dialogue. We shall see how his approach is valuable for studying textual characters that are depicted through their speech discourse, specifically Old Testament characters.¹¹⁷ We shall also see how his approach is valuable for better understanding the relationship between the author and the reader.

¹¹⁶ Carleen Mandolfo, "You Meant Evil Against Me: Dialogic Truth and the Character of Jacob in the Joseph Story," *JSOT* 28 (2004): 452.

¹¹⁷ McCracken, "Character In The Boundary," 29. McCracken also argued that Bakhtin's work is needed "in response" to what he recognized as "the peculiar challenges of biblical character." McCracken did so because he felt that more needed to be said concerning biblical characterization than had been by approaches that were influenced by Aristotle, Propp, and Chatman. This dissertation agrees with McCracken that more needs to be said concerning the interpretation of Old Testament characters than what has been contributed thus far by the narratological realist and deconstructive purist approaches that have influenced the study of Old Testament characters, as mentioned above.

In the first chapter, the various dialogic relationships created by dialogic discourse will be examined. We will see in this first chapter how a metalinguistic analysis of a speech discourse allows one to study these relationships beyond an abstract theory and according to their dialogic reality in order to better appreciate the artistic expression of an individual and the complex reality of speech communication.

In the second chapter we will examine how Bakhtin applied his dialogic approach to the study of textual characters, primarily to the works of Dostoevsky. We will also see in this chapter how Bakhtin's approach to interpreting textual characters differs from other approaches discussed in this introduction, and how some biblical scholars have appropriated Bakhtin's approach to study Old Testament narratives and characters.

In Chapter three, we will see Bakhtin's dialogic approach in action as it is applied to 1 Kings 16–17. We will see how studying the dialogic relationships that exist among the biblical narrator, the characters, the reader, and among the speech discourses create a better understanding and a better appreciation of the realistic and aesthetic nature of Elijah and the other characters of this narrative.¹¹⁸ It will also strengthen our appreciation for the artistic expression of the author and characters, and also offer observations concerning how Bakhtin's approach leads the reader to interpret the textual characters of these narratives in a much different way than other interpretational approaches.

There are two goals in writing this dissertation. First, to contribute toward the dialogue of how a reader is to interpret a textual character, or what W.L. Humphries calls a "renewed

¹¹⁸ I acknowledge that the "author" and the "narrator" can be two different people or perspectives, such as in Mark Twain's *Huck Finn* or J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*. In these two novels the main characters, Huck Finn and Holden Cawfield are the narrators, and Twain and Salinger are the authors. In biblical narrative, however, the author and narrator are often assumed to be the same person and same perspective. Thus, when speaking about biblical narrative, these two terms for me are interchangeable, unless noted otherwise.

attention to character and characterization” in both literary study generally and in biblical studies specifically.¹¹⁹ Second, and perhaps more importantly, it is a goal of this dissertation to contribute toward another important dialogue. We will show how Bakhtin’s dialogic approach offers theological insights into biblical characters to a confessional Lutheran community that may not otherwise have been available to them. Bakhtin’s dialogic hermeneutic offers insights that accentuate and enact the confessional Lutheran presuppositions concerning Christ and His Word, and also better prepare the confessional Lutheran community for a more productive dialogue with narrative-critical interpretive communities who disagree with their theological presuppositions.

¹¹⁹ Humphries, *The Character of God*, 7.

CHAPTER ONE

THE DIALOGIC RELATIONSHIPS OF DIALOGUE

I. Introduction: The Metalinguistic Analysis of Dialogue

Mikhail Bakhtin's approach to interpretation is distinct from other interpretive approaches because of its focus on dialogue, or what Bakhtin calls *dialogic discourse*. In addition to the linguistic relationships that words have to the other words within a discourse, Bakhtin was concerned with studying the complex relationships that a discourse acquires outside of itself.¹²⁰ Discourse that enters into dialogue is more complex than the abstract conceptions and models that traditional linguistic approaches have used to describe it.¹²¹ Dialogue, Bakhtin argues, is permeated with *dialogic relationships*.

Dialogic relationships are established with entities outside of a discourse, such as the author and receiver of a discourse and other already spoken discourses. These relationships presuppose a dialogic reality where words only have meaning and come to life as they are spoken or written by people for other people, and in the context of millions of already spoken words.¹²² Dialogic relationships are not linguistic, but rather *extralinguistic* or *metalinguistic* phenomena. Therefore, according to Bakhtin, the dialogic relationships of discourse need

¹²⁰ Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 11, write that in addition to linguistic relationships of words, Bakhtin was "also concerned with comprehending the manifold complexity of specific utterances in particular situations."

¹²¹ See Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," 81. In both early and later writings Bakhtin points out what he sees as the limitations of Saussure's linguistic approach and his telegraphic model. Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," 67, also speaks concerning the limitations of "Nineteenth Century linguistics, beginning with Wilhelm von Humboldt."

¹²² Bakhtin, *Problems in Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 183. "Dialogic interaction is indeed the authentic sphere
(continued next page)

metalinguistic analysis in order to properly understand their complexities and their artistic value. Metalinguistic analysis, for Bakhtin, studies the dialogic relationships that discourses have to the people who speak or write them, to the people who listen to them or read them, and also to other already spoken discourses that frame their context.¹²³

By advocating metalinguistic analysis, Bakhtin does not exclude the importance of linguistic analysis or the contributions that traditional linguistic approaches made in understanding language.¹²⁴ Metalinguistic and linguistic analysis both “study one and the same concrete, highly complex, and multifaceted phenomenon, namely, the word,” Bakhtin writes, “but they study it from various sides and points of view.”¹²⁵ Linguistics, for him, analyzes the compositional form of speech discourse. It studies the syntactical and lexical-semantic characteristics of words *within* a discourse. Metalinguistic analysis, on the other hand, studies the relationships that words have *outside* of discourse. Linguistics and metalinguistics, for Bakhtin, were both necessary to understanding the meaning and the intent of a person’s discourse.¹²⁶

where language lives,” Bakhtin writes.

¹²³ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 182, writes, “The dialogic angle is precisely what can not be measured by pure linguistic criteria, because dialogic relationships, although belonging to the realm of the *word*, do not belong to the realm of its purely linguistic study.”

¹²⁴ Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 11, write that Bakhtin did not mean to “exclude the systemacity that characterizes post-Saussurean linguistics.” See also Bakhtin, *Problems in Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 181, who writes, “Of course, metalinguistic research cannot ignore linguistics and must make use of its results.” See also Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 330–45. Clark and Holquist note the healthy dialogue Bakhtin had with many linguists. In September of 1958 it was Roman Jakobson who circulated Bakhtin’s work on Dostoevsky. Near his death Holquist writes that Bakhtin was “lionized by literary theoreticians, both by the structuralists and Tartu semioticians on the left, particularly Uspensky and Ivanov” (Holquist and Clark even show a picture of Uspensky carrying Bakhtin’s casket at his funeral).

¹²⁵ See Bakhtin, *Problems in Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 181.

¹²⁶ Bakhtin, *Problems in Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 183. Linguistics, Bakhtin asserts, “must utilize the results of metalinguistics” if it is going to study the complexities and artistic value of dialogic discourse.

II. The Dialogic Relationship of the Speaker and the Receiver of a Discourse

A. The Dialogic Nature of the Consciousness

The complex and artistic aspects of *dialogic discourse*, for Bakhtin, are determined by the *dialogic* nature of the speaking individual. While many sociological and psychological studies describe the individual in terms of *personality* or *being*, Bakhtin's favorite term for describing the individual was *consciousness*.¹²⁷ For him, the consciousness revealed itself and became aware of itself through dialogue in relationship with other consciousnesses.¹²⁸ In other words, Bakhtin, like many thinkers before him, described the individual in terms of the *self* and *other* relationship.

First of all, a consciousness is dialogic, Bakhtin argues, because a person can only become truly conscious of himself or herself by living in community with other dialogic consciousnesses. "I cannot manage without another, I cannot become myself without another; I must find myself in another by finding another in myself," Bakhtin writes.¹²⁹ A person receives his or her name, his or her language, and his or her culture from others, he pointed out. "No human events," he asserted, "are developed or resolved within the bounds of a single consciousness."¹³⁰ Thus, the

¹²⁷ See Seymour Chatman's discussion on "personality" and the "self in" *Story and Discourse*, 120–26, in which he defines these terms on the basis of psychological and sociological studies of behavior and mental traits.

¹²⁸ Bakhtin, "Toward a Reworking," 292. "The discovery of the human personality and his consciousness," Bakhtin writes, "could not have been accomplished without discovery of new aspects of the word, in a person's means of speech expression." For Bakhtin, this "discovery of new aspects of the word" recognized that the individual or the consciousness is dialogic. Bakhtin asserted that people express their personality or consciousness primarily in the words they speak *on the threshold or boundary* of other people. This is different from many psychological and sociological points of views of the individual which will be discussed below. See Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 50. They identify this as Bakhtin's "global sense" of dialogic which considered the nature of the self.

¹²⁹ Bakhtin, "Toward a Reworking," 287. For Bakhtin, the dialogic consciousness does not just express itself for others, but its point of view on the self and the world is shaped by other peoples' consciousnesses.

¹³⁰ Bakhtin, "Toward a Reworking," 288.

very inception of one's consciousness is dialogic in that it arises through the spoken discourses that come to it as a gift from others.¹³¹

A consciousness is dialogic, second of all, because a person has an opinion or a point of view on the world and on himself or herself. "True dialogic relations are possible," Bakhtin writes, only when someone becomes "a carrier of his own truth" and "occupies a signifying (ideological) position."¹³² Bakhtin defined consciousness as "a particular point of view on the world and oneself," and the "position enabling a person to interpret and evaluate his own self and his surrounding reality."¹³³ A person's consciousness or personality, for Bakhtin, is much more than how a person acts or behaves. A person's consciousness is the ideological perspective that he or she has on life, on culture, on other people, and most importantly, on himself or herself.

Finally, a consciousness is also dialogic, according to Bakhtin, because it seeks to express its point of view of the self and of the world for others. "To be," he wrote, "means to be for another and through the other, for oneself."¹³⁴ A person expresses his or her point of view for others by participating in the dialogue of life. "To live means to participate in dialogue," he wrote, "to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth."¹³⁵ People speak in dialogue with each other for more than just conveying information. They speak in order to reveal their

¹³¹ Bakhtin, "Toward a Reworking," 287–88. "A person has no internal sovereign territory, he is wholly and always on the boundary; looking inside himself, he looks into the eyes of another or with the eyes of another," Bakhtin writes. "Justification can not be *self*-justification; recognition can not be *self*-recognition. I receive my name from others," he also pointed out. "No human events are developed or resolved within the bounds of a single consciousness."

¹³² Bakhtin, "Toward a Reworking," 286.

¹³³ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 47.

¹³⁴ Bakhtin, "Toward a Reworking," 287, also writes, "Dialogic relations presuppose a communality of the object of intention," a "directionality" of an expression.

¹³⁵ Bakhtin, "Toward a Reworking," 293, asserts, "The single adequate form for *verbally expressing* authentic human life is the *open-ended dialogue*."

consciousness by expressing their points of view for others. A person invests his or her entire self as a dialogic consciousness for the purpose of *expressing* his or her own *individual word or truth* in dialogue with others.

Thus, Bakhtin viewed the dialogic consciousness not as individual, but as *interindividual*, always living “wholly and always on the boundary” of another person.¹³⁶ The purpose of life is not just to express oneself as an isolated individual, but to do so in dialogic communion with others and for others. “In actuality,” he wrote, “a person exists in the forms of *I* and *another*,” or as an *I-thou*.¹³⁷ In other words, the dialogic existence of a consciousness is dependent on its relationship to others. A person can only come to know himself or herself and can only be able to express himself or herself when in dialogic relationship with others.¹³⁸

B. The Strength of the Dialogic Relationship between Two Consciousnesses

Although an individual always exists in *I-thou* dialogic relationship to another person when in dialogue, the speaking individual, Bakhtin points out, can strengthen or weaken his or her *I-thou* relationship to another person by the way he or she chooses to speak. All dialogic discourse creates a natural dialogic relationship between two people, but the dialogic relationship itself is a complex relationship that has various degrees of dialogic potential for one consciousness on the boundary of another. The strength of the dialogic relationship between two people, Bakhtin explains, depends on the speaker’s “task” or “aim” of his or her discourse when

¹³⁶ Bakhtin, “Toward a Reworking,” 287. “A person has no internal sovereign territory, he is wholly and always on the boundary; looking inside himself, he looks into the eyes of another or with the eyes of another.”

¹³⁷ Bakhtin, “Toward a Reworking,” 293–94. Bakhtin writes, the most important “acts constituting self-consciousness are determined by a relationship toward another consciousness (toward a *thou*).”

¹³⁸ Bakhtin, “Toward a Reworking,” 295. “In everything a person uses to express himself on the outside (and consequently, for *another*) – from the body to the word—an intense interaction takes place between *I* and *other*.”

it is spoken for another. Bakhtin distinguishes between how a speaker can choose to speak with a *nondialogic* or *monologic* aim, or a *dialogic* aim toward his or her listeners.¹³⁹

If the speaker's aim or task is *monologic* by nature then the speaker's discourse is spoken in a way that expects no tested response and no truly open-ended dialogue.¹⁴⁰ Instead, the expression of the speaker's discourse "is finalized and deaf to the other's response," Bakhtin points out. The speaker does not expect his or her discourse to be questioned by the receiver and "does not acknowledge any *decisive* force" in the response from the receiver of the discourse.¹⁴¹

A father may use monologic discourse, for example, when he commands his son to clean his room. The way he speaks his command to his son can imply that the father's command is final and that there will be no debate or discussion regarding it. People often use *monologic* discourse when expressing political views. When speaking at a political rally a person may use language such as "without a doubt" and "the outcome will certainly be" with the aim of deadening any other political view point. The speaker also may aim to objectify his or her opponent's consciousness by saying something like, "he believes that raising your taxes is a good thing" or "she does not trust you the common person so she is going to wire tap your phones."

¹³⁹ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 146. Thus, Bakhtin used the term *dialogic* in more than one sense. All utterances are dialogic in a broad sense according to Bakhtin, but the aim of the speaker can then become *dialogic* in a narrow sense, or *monologic*.

¹⁴⁰ Bakhtin, "Toward a Reworking," 293, writes of monologic discourse, "No response is expected from it that could change everything in the world of my consciousness."

¹⁴¹ Bakhtin, "Toward a Reworking," 293. See also Morson and Emerson, *Creation of Prosaics*, 148. Concerning monologic discourse, the speaker, according to Morson and Emerson, says "what he wants to say as if there were no question that his way of saying it will accomplish his purpose and that there could be no equally adequate way."

Thus, discourse is *monologic* when its aim is to materialize and objectify all reality for its receivers so that only its point of view is heard.¹⁴² *Monologic* dialogue does not recognize another person in dialogue as an equal consciousness and as a potentially different, yet equal, point of view.¹⁴³ When someone speaks *monologically*, the dialogic relationship between the speaker and the receiver of the utterance is weakened. Speaking with a *monologic aim* makes the receiver of the discourse the *object* of the speaker's consciousness.

When speaking with a *dialogic aim*, the speaker not only speaks his or her discourse for another person, but the speaker speaks in a way that recognizes another person as a "fully valid, authentic carrier of his own individual word."¹⁴⁴ The speaker communicates to another person in a way that expects and anticipates a truly active and tested response and in a way that recognizes the other person as an equal partner in an open-ended dialogue.¹⁴⁵ The speaking individual strengthens the dialogic *I-thou* relationship to another consciousness when he or she speaks with a *dialogic aim* or *task* by choosing to acknowledge another person as an equal consciousness and equal point of view in dialogue and not just an object of his or her consciousness.

If, for example, a father tells his son he wishes for him to clean his room and allows the son to respond, "Yes, dad, I will clean my room as you wish for me to do" or "Yes, dad, I will

¹⁴² Bakhtin, "Toward a Reworking," 293, writes, "*Monologism* denies the existence outside itself of another consciousness with equal rights and equal responsibilities, another *I* with equal rights (*thou*)." It "manages without the other," and "pretends to be the *ultimate* word." For Bakhtin, it "closes down the represented world and represented persons."

¹⁴³ The speaker's discourse is *dialogic* only in a general sense in that it is for another person, and may even expect and anticipate a response. However, the speaker speaks in a way that shows he or she does not expect that his or her response can be questioned or tested.

¹⁴⁴ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 5.

¹⁴⁵ Bakhtin, "Toward a Reworking," 293. In contrast to the *monologic* aim of discourse, Bakhtin writes, "Dialogic relations presuppose communality of the object of intention (directionality)." See also Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship*, 36. Barbara Green writes, "To create in this way is to acknowledge the other with discipline, responsivity, and refinement, to negotiate rather than to bully."

clean my room, but I would like to finish my game first,” then the father’s speech expression is inviting a tested response and a dialogue from his son. The father has expressed his point of view with a *dialogic aim* instead of *monologic aim*. If a person at a political rally speaks his or her perspective regarding an issue and even articulates his or her understanding of an opponent’s view on the same issue, but does not objectify the opponent or his or her opponent’s view, then likewise, the speaker expresses his or her point of view with a *dialogic aim* instead of a *monologic aim*.

Bakhtin’s concept of the dialogic consciousness shows that an individual is never truly an *individual* when participating in dialogue with another person. The dialogic consciousness is a complex *interindividual*. A person may have a subjective point of view on himself or herself and on the world, but that person and his or her point of view is always in dialogic relationship with another person and that person’s point of view. As a dialogic consciousness a person may strengthen or weaken his or her relationship to another person by choosing a *dialogic* or *monologic* aim for his or her discourse. Yet, regardless of whether a person speaks with a *dialogic* or a *monologic aim* toward another person, the speaker always exists on the boundary of another, expressing himself or herself for another, and yet at the same time is being shaped by another.

C. Bakhtin’s Concept of the Dialogic Consciousness Compared to Other Philosophies of the Individual

i. Bakhtin’s *I-Thou* compared to Martin Buber’s Existential *I-Thou*. Bakhtin has been compared to Martin Buber because, he like Buber, discussed the relationship of the *self* to the *other* with the term *I-thou*.¹⁴⁶ However, while he was certainly influenced by Buber’s existential

¹⁴⁶ See, for instance, the article by Maurice Friedman, “Martin Buber and Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogue of (continued next page)

philosophy, Bakhtin's concept of the dialogic *I-thou* relationship was different from Buber's existential *I-thou* relationship.¹⁴⁷ According to Clark and Holquist, what makes Bakhtin unique is not his emphasis on the "self /other dichotomy," but rather how he framed this relationship in terms of "authorship."¹⁴⁸ Bakhtin's thought, they write, is "a philosophy of creation," more than a philosophy of existence.¹⁴⁹ His concept of the *I-thou* relationship described how a person communicates with other people more than how a person exists as Buber's *I-thou* concept attempted to explain.

The difference between Bakhtin and Buber's *I-thou* dichotomies is also seen in how they viewed God in relationship to the individual. For Buber and Bakhtin both, God's relationship to man played an important role in considering how a person is able to live in *I-thou* relationship to others.¹⁵⁰ For Buber, who was influenced deeply by his Jewish faith, God was the "eternal thou," the "wholly other."¹⁵¹ For him, a person could only truly understand his or her existence in

Voices and the Word that is Spoken," *Religion and Literature* 33 (Autumn 2001): 353–66. Friedman notes how Bakhtin even admitted that Buber's *I-thou* had influenced his thinking. For Bakhtin, as well as for Buber, Friedman points out, "the person does not dwell within himself but on the boundary; for his self-consciousness is constituted by his relationship to a *Thou*."

¹⁴⁷ Friedman, "Martin Buber and Mikhail Bakhtin," 29. For Buber, in contrast to Bakhtin, Friedman writes, it is "poetry rather than the novel that witnesses to the 'word that is spoken.'" See also Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaic*, 49. Morson and Emerson write that Bakhtin's concept of *I-thou* was different from Buber's, although they do not say why or how. Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 80, point out that another Jewish philosopher, Hermann Cohen, introduced Bakhtin to the concept of self/other relationships long before Buber.

¹⁴⁸ See Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 80. "Although the self/other distinction is a recurring preoccupation of many other post-Romantic systems of thought," Clark and Holquist write, "Bakhtin is the only major figure to frame the problem in terms of authorship." They continue, "He is distinguished not by his emphasis on the self/other dichotomy as such but rather by his emphasis on the essentially authorial techniques of dialogue and character formation."

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.* Clark and Holquist write, "Ultimately Bakhtin's thought is a philosophy of creation, a meditation on the mysteries inherent in God's making people and people's making themselves, with the activity of people creating other people in literary authorship as a paradigm for thinking at all levels of creating."

¹⁵⁰ Stephen Panko, *Makers of the Modern Theological Mind: Martin Buber* (ed. Bob E. Patterson; Word Books: Waco, Tex., 1976), 61.

¹⁵¹ Martin Buber, *The Eclipse of God: Studies in the Relationship between Religion and Philosophy* (trans. (continued next page)

relationship to others through knowledge of and relationship with God as the “eternal thou.” Prayer and sacrifice were the two greatest ways for one to enter into relationship with God, because according to Buber, God can only be “addressed,” not expressed.¹⁵²

Bakhtin, on the other hand, was influenced by his Russian Orthodox Christian faith.¹⁵³ Central to his religious and dialogic thought was Christ and his incarnation and the idea that God expressed himself, as himself, yet for man as a gift for man.¹⁵⁴ Every person, Bakhtin posited, seeks to be justified by another person. When a person finds being justified by the *other* in the world unsatisfying, he argues, the need to be justified by the *other* is “transformed into a need for religious justification.” When a person seeks to be justified by God, Bakhtin writes, he or she “is filled with the need for forgiveness and redemption as an absolutely pure gift (an unmerited gift), with a need for mercy and grace that are totally otherworldly.”¹⁵⁵ Only God in Christ can consummate a person’s need to be justified with true forgiveness and redemption as a gift.¹⁵⁶

Maurice S. Friedman; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952), 79.

¹⁵² Panko, *Martin Buber*, 62.

¹⁵³ Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 120, point out that Bakhtin “was a religious man.” Although he may not have been a “churchgoer,” Bakhtin was known as a “churchman” within his intellectual circles and he was “ideologically committed to the church.” They also note in a footnote that Bakhtin’s mother and sisters opened letters to Bakhtin’s older brother Nikolai with the Easter greeting, “Christ is risen!”

¹⁵⁴ Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 82, write, “What distinguishes Bakhtin is not his theories about the personhood of Christ but his way of using those ideas to refresh areas other than theology.” See also Alexandar Mihailovic, *Corporeal Words: Mikhail Bakhtin’s Theology of Discourse* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 5. “We cannot dismiss,” Mihailovic writes, Bakhtin’s interest in Christ “as terminological because the interaction among Christological motifs saturates his critical lexicon of dialogue, carnival, and polyphony and is in fact crucial in defining the interrelatedness of those latter concepts.”

¹⁵⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity,” in *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays* (ed. Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov; trans. Vadim Liapunov; Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1990), 143–45, points to the prayers of the Publican, the Canaanite woman, and the words of Psalm 51 as examples of confessional self-accounting.

¹⁵⁶ Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in the Aesthetic Activity,” 144. Thus, for Bakhtin, “Outside God, outside the bounds of trust in absolute otherness self-consciousness and self-utterance are impossible. They are impossible, he writes, not because they because they would be senseless practically, but because trust in God is an immanent constitutive moment of pure self-consciousness and self-expression.”

In Christ there is synthesized “an immaculately pure relationship to oneself” with an “ethical-aesthetic kindness toward the other,” Bakhtin writes. Christ enacted through his incarnation, life, death, and resurrection a sacrifice for the ultimate redemption of others. Yet, he did so in the fullness of himself as *I-for-myself*, according to Bakhtin, as an “infinitely deepened *I-for-myself*,” which is “not a cold *I-for-myself*, but one of boundless kindness toward the *other*.”¹⁵⁷ Only in Christ can we see the radical life that arises from incarnation, which makes use of one’s self and one’s perspective in dialogue with and for the sake of the other.¹⁵⁸

God’s consummation of my need to be justified in Christ changes my point of view of God, Bakhtin writes. God is not just an “eternal thou” who is “wholly other,” as Buber suggested, nor is he defined by me as “the voice of my consciousness,” as the “purity of my relationship with myself,” or as the one “into whose hands it is a fearful thing to fall.” Rather, God is the one who has justified me by his forgiving and redeeming word in Christ. Only He is able to be for me “the heavenly father who is over me and can be merciful to me and justify me where I, from within myself, cannot be merciful to me and justify myself.”¹⁵⁹

Furthermore, only because Christ manifested his kindness to me by giving himself for me can I also truly become self-conscious of myself in a way that enables me to become *I-for-myself* as a gift of love and mercy for the *other*. Anticipating through faith my justification in God, I

¹⁵⁷ Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in the Aesthetic Activity,” 55–56. “All human beings divide for him into himself as the unique one – and all other human beings, into himself as the one bestowing mercy—and all others as receiving mercy, into himself as the savior—and all others as the saved, into himself as the one assuming the burden of sin and expiation—and all others as relieved of this burden and redeemed.”

¹⁵⁸ Thanks to Rev. Dr. David Schmitt, professor of Homiletics who helped to articulate this important point of Bakhtin’s understanding of Christ’s incarnation.

¹⁵⁹ Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in the Aesthetic Activity,” 142.

become *I-for-myself* into the other for God.¹⁶⁰ The radical result of Christ becoming incarnate and in dialogue with me, Bakhtin writes, is that I become “For myself, sacrifice; for the other, loving mercy.”¹⁶¹

Thus, God for Bakhtin, was not just an “eternal thou” for a person to address, but rather the ultimate author and creator of dialogue and the ultimate author and creator of the *I-Thou* relationship, because in Christ, God addressed man.¹⁶² Where Buber’s view of his relationship to God was determined by his human sacrificial actions and prayers to God, Bakhtin’s view of his relationship to God was determined by God’s sacrificial (and sacramental) actions in Christ as a gracious gift to him. “Joy is possible for me only in God or in the world,” Bakhtin writes, “only where I partake in being in a justified manner through the other and for the other.”¹⁶³ Because God in Christ became *I-for-myself* for the *other* for me, now I become *I-for-myself* for the *other* for God.

ii. Bakhtin’s Dialogic Consciousness Compared to Psychological and Linguistic.

Approaches to the Individual. Bakhtin’s concept of the dialogic consciousness is also different from other approaches that objectify or materialize the individual. The consciousness in dialogic relationship to other consciousnesses, for instance, is more complex than what psychological abstractions have described it to be. Some psychological philosophies have defined the

¹⁶⁰ Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in the Aesthetic Activity,” 145.

¹⁶¹ Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in the Aesthetic Activity,” 56–57.

¹⁶² Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in the Aesthetic Activity,” 1. Bakhtin reveals his Christological understanding to the dialogic consciousness in his work, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity,” where he explains the ability to create, or “author” an image is determined by the relationship of the *I* to the *other*. Bakhtin began this work, “For a proper understanding of the author’s architectonically stable and dynamically living relationship to the hero, we must take into account both the essentially necessary foundation of that relationship and the diverse individual characteristics that it assumes in particular authors and in particular works.”

¹⁶³ Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in the Aesthetic Activity,” 136.

individual, or a *personality* in terms of a person's actions or behaviors.¹⁶⁴ Other psychological approaches have expanded their definition beyond the acts and behavior of a person to include a person's mental traits.¹⁶⁵ Regardless of what these psychological approaches define an individual as, the difference between Bakhtin's conception of an individual as a dialogic consciousness and these psychological approaches is in how they describe the individual.

Seymour Chatman, influenced by J. P. Guilford and Gordon W. Allport's psychological approaches, interprets a person's personality by describing what a person is "like."¹⁶⁶ A person builds a *paradigm of traits* for a person Chatman suggests, such as "weak" or "strong," "humble" or "proud," "jealous" or "curious."¹⁶⁷ In other words, by interpreting or describing what another person is "like," Chatman and other psychological approaches reduce an individual to a fixed image or an abstract and materialized object in the mind of another person.

When a person materializes or objectifies another person as a fixed image he or she shows that he or she has a *monologic* aim at interpreting another person as an individual. "With a monologic approach (in its extreme or pure form)," he wrote, "*another person* remains wholly and merely an *object of consciousness*, and not another consciousness."¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ See Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 120. Chatman makes this observation, quoting from the *Dictionary of Philosophy* (ed. Dagobert Runes; Totowa, N.J.: Littlefield Adams, 1975), 230. Chatman writes, "The *Dictionary* tells us that 'person' means the concrete unity of acts." This definition, he notes, would satisfy Aristotle and the Formalists and Structuralists who reduced textual characters to action.

¹⁶⁵ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 121–22, for example, points to the works of J.P. Guilford and Gordon W. Allport who define *personality* in terms of traits a person exhibits mentally in addition to behavior. See J.P. Guilford, *Personality* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), as quoted in E. L. Kelly, *Assessment of Human Characteristics* (Belmont, Calif.: Brooks/Cole, 1967), 15. A "trait," according to Guilford is "any distinguishable, relatively enduring way in which one individual differs from another."

¹⁶⁶ See Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 120. Chatman asserts that when we interpret textual characters, "We reconstruct 'what the characters are like.'"

¹⁶⁷ Chatman suggests that the traits we label people with are learned from our culture. He writes that traits are "culturally coded." See Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 123.

¹⁶⁸ Bakhtin, "Toward a Reworking," 292–93.

Materializing and objectifying individuals as images, Bakhtin argues, is “profoundly inadequate for life and for discourse.”¹⁶⁹ It is not “who” a person or an individual “is” or what he or she is “like” that we describe or interpret. Interpreting a person as a fixed image or as a materialized object describes only a partial and an abstract quality of a person from one person’s perspective.

In the dialogic world a person can never be just an image or an object. Interpreting a person *dialogically* means to interpret how a person views himself or herself and the world, while being in relationship with other people and their consciousnesses. He or she is an active consciousness in dialogue with himself or herself, with others, and with the world. Therefore, the consciousness of a person is not an object that can be finalized, fixed, or materialized. It is, according to Bakhtin, a point of view that can be dialogued with.

Bakhtin’s concept of the individual as a dialogic consciousness also shows that his understanding of the relationship between two people in dialogue with each other is different from how many traditional linguistic approaches view this relationship. Many traditional linguistic approaches do not recognize two people in a dialogic *I-thou* relationship when they are in dialogue with each other. Instead, according to Bakhtin, they view the communication of a speech discourse as if there is “only *one speaker* who does not have any *necessary* relation to *other* participants.”¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Bakhtin, “Toward a Reworking,” 293, writes, “Reified (materializing, objectified) images are profoundly inadequate for life and for discourse. A reified model of the world is now being replaced by a dialogic model.”

¹⁷⁰ Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 67. It is important to note that Bakhtin made this statement toward the end of his career so he was not just speaking against the Russian Formalists of his earlier career. Bakhtin identifies 19th century linguistics, beginning with Wilhelm von Humboldt and later strengthened by the work of Saussure for this view how the speaker relates to the listener.

When the dialogic role of the other participant in a dialogue is not taken into account, the receiver of the discourse is only seen as a passive decoder of a message or a “listener, who understands the speaker only passively.”¹⁷¹ Bakhtin rejected this passive view of the receiver of a speech communication. For him, this view distorts the actual picture of speech communication by “removing the active role of the *other*.” It only represents an abstraction of the complex dialogic reality of how two people communicate with each other in a dialogue.¹⁷²

In a dialogue, the speaker or writer is always considering the listener or reader when shaping his or her discourse. “The speaker strives to get a reading on his own word, and on his own conceptual horizon, that determines this word,” Bakhtin acknowledges, but only “within the alien horizon of the understanding receiver.”¹⁷³ The speaker enters into *I-thou* dialogic relationship with his or her audience by choosing a particular vocabulary, by choosing which details and descriptions of images to communicate, and by choosing the particular context of his or her discourse that will result in a meaningful communication.¹⁷⁴ In dialogue the speaker

¹⁷¹ Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 68, writes, “Still current in linguistics are such fictions as the ‘listener’ and ‘understander’ (partners of the ‘speaker’) . . . These fictions produce a completely distorted idea of the complex and multifaceted process of active speech communications.” He then points to Saussure’s “graphic schematic depictions of the two partners in speech communication” - the speaker and the passive listener. “One cannot say that these diagrams are false or that they do not correspond to certain aspects of reality,” Bakhtin acknowledges. However, they do not describe “the actual whole speech communication.”

¹⁷² Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 69–70, writes, “What is represented by the diagrams is an abstract of the real total act of actively responsive understanding, the sort of understanding that evokes a response, and one that the speaker anticipates.”

¹⁷³ Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” 282. Therefore, the speaker enters into dialogic relationships with certain aspects of “the alien horizon of the listener” as the speaker constructs his or her discourse against the listener’s background.

¹⁷⁴ In biblical studies the study of how and why authors choose to write for their audiences is called *Isagogics*. For instance, whereas one Gospel writer may have described the transfigured Jesus as “shining like the sun,” it has been suggested that Luke only described Jesus as “shining brightly,” because he did not want his Roman audience to interpret Jesus as being Apollo, the Roman sun god.

shapes his or her discourse in light of the experience, context, and shared assumptions of his or her listeners and readers.

Second, in a dialogue, the dialogic consciousness can never be a passive listener because, when engaged by a discourse, a person immediately begins to take an active responsive attitude toward the discourse and the speaker, Bakhtin argues. The receiver of a discourse enters into *I-thou* dialogic relationship with the speaker as he or she “grasps why” a speech discourse is being spoken, and then relates it to his or her “complex of interests and assumptions.” He or she also evaluates the discourse and prepares a response to it, considering even how future speeches will respond to it.¹⁷⁵ In reality, the dialogic consciousness does more than passively understand or decode a message. The dialogic consciousness most often subconsciously, yet *simultaneously*, understands, evaluates, and prepares an *active response* to the speaker with whom it is in dialogue.

Therefore, Bakhtin rejected a commonly accepted theory that the receiver of a discourse must “merge” or enter into another person’s consciousness “forgetting one’s own” point of view in order objectively to interpret that person’s consciousness.¹⁷⁶ “A certain entry as a living being” into another’s perspective is a “necessary part of the process of understanding it,” he acknowledges.¹⁷⁷ Yet, when a person forgets his or her own subjective point of view, he or she

¹⁷⁵ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 127–28.

¹⁷⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Response to a Question,” in *Speech Genres and Other Essays* (ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist; trans. Vern W. McGee; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 7. This manuscript is entitled, “Response to a Question from the *Novy Mir* Editorial Staff,” because it was Bakhtin’s answer to the editor of *Novy Mir*, a “liberal” Russian monthly journal. (See introduction to *Speech Genres and other Late Essays*, xi). The question posed to Bakhtin was, “How would you evaluate the current state of literary scholarship?” Bakhtin does not mention who in particular held this view - “forgetting one’s” own point of view in interpreting a text. However, one could imagine that he was speaking about many formalist and structuralist scholars who were determined to achieve objectivity in interpretation.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

does not obtain objective understanding, but rather forfeits the opportunity to participate in true dialogic response and relationship with another. The goal of *understanding* another person in this way becomes mere *duplication* of another's consciousness, which is an impossible goal because a person would have to have the exact same life experiences as the speaker in order to duplicate his or her consciousness. If it were possible to duplicate another's consciousness, Bakhtin argues that our communication would lead to nothing "new or enriching."¹⁷⁸

When a person participates in the *open-ended dialogue*, according to Bakhtin, he or she does more than just *understand* or *duplicate* another person and his or her consciousness in an objectified sense. The goal of the dialogic consciousness is to *understand creatively* another's consciousness so that we can take a responsive attitude toward others.¹⁷⁹ "Creative understanding," which seeks to respond to another person and his or her point of view, Bakhtin argues, "does not renounce itself, its own place in time, its own culture; and it forgets nothing."¹⁸⁰ When a person occupies "a signifying position" as dialogic consciousness for the purpose of actively responding to another person, his or her interpretive experience is naturally conditioned by his or her own subjective truth and experience, or what Bakhtin calls a person's *outsidedness*.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in the Aesthetic Activity," 78. What good is mere empathy without a response? If I see another person suffering I should want more than to understand their suffering. I should want to respond in a way that shows I am empathetic. If someone else were "to fuse with me," Bakhtin acknowledges, "He would see and know only what I already see and know, he would only repeat in himself the inescapable closed circle of my own life." For true dialogic understanding and response to take place, Bakhtin argues "let him remain outside of me." See also Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 55. Duplicating or "merging" with another's point of view only results in "empathy." It does not allow an active response to another's point of view.

¹⁷⁹ Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," 69. All "real and integral understanding," Bakhtin asserted "is actively responsive."

¹⁸⁰ Bakhtin, "Response to a Question," 7.

¹⁸¹ See Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 53. Bakhtin used the term *outsidedness* to describe a person's own subjective experience and perspective in life. See Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in the Aesthetic (continued next page)

By retaining one's outsidedness for creative understanding, Bakhtin did not mean to suggest that one is free to neglect, distort, or deconstruct another person's consciousness or point of view.¹⁸² To do so ends open-ended dialogue, and weakens the dialogic relationship between two people in dialogue.¹⁸³ Rather, as a dialogic consciousness a person recognizes how he or she is conscious of himself or herself, others, and the world, and also how other people are conscious of themselves, others, and the world.¹⁸⁴ As a dialogic consciousness a person acknowledges the importance of understanding another speaker's consciousness and his or her intended expressed truth, not to objectify it or duplicate it, but to actively respond to it.¹⁸⁵

If one views the individual as a dialogic consciousness, his or her interpretation of people as personalities will be more complex than a person who views the individual according to the abstract philosophies proposed by psychological approaches.¹⁸⁶ A person views the

Activity," 25. When a person stands in front of another person, his or her experience is conditioned by their *outsidedness*. "I, but not he," Bakhtin argues, can "see the clear blue sky against whose background his suffering external image takes on meaning for me." See also page 78. For meaningful dialogue and meaningful *creative understanding* to take place, Bakhtin stated, "it is immensely important for the person who understands to be located outside the object of his or her understanding—in time, in space, in culture."

¹⁸² Bakhtin, "Response to a Question," 2. Bakhtin criticized the Marxist deconstructive approach that always deconstructs a person or a text as if they "can be correlated with socioeconomic, as it were, behind culture's back." Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaic*, 233, write, "Bakhtin would undoubtedly have dismissed the influential forms of relativism dominating current critical debate. If, as some have recently argued, all disputes ultimately reduce to questions of power or interest, then 'authentic dialogue' about values and meaning is pointless."

¹⁸³ Thus, as Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 284, point out, "Bakhtin rejected the solutions offered both by the 'semiotic totalizers (i.e. the formalists and structuralists who view the meaning of a work as objective) and by absolute 'relativists.'"

¹⁸⁴ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 47. Bakhtin credited Dostoevsky's works in helping him develop his dialogic understanding of consciousness. In describing Dostoevsky's understanding of the hero in his works, Bakhtin writes, "the hero interests Dostoevsky as a particular point of view on the world and on oneself, as the position enabling a person to interpret and evaluate his own self and his surrounding reality. What is important to Dostoevsky is not how his hero appears in the world but first and foremost how the world appears to his hero, and how the hero appears to himself."

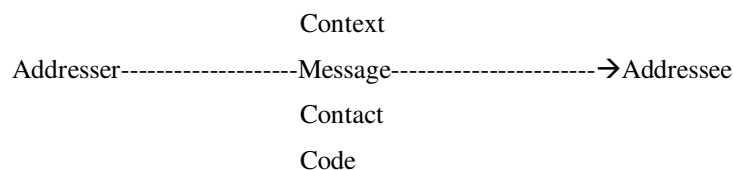
¹⁸⁵ Bakhtin, "Response to a Question," 7. Meaning can only be revealed in its "depths," Bakhtin asserts, when "it has encountered and come into contact with another, foreign meaning."

¹⁸⁶ People, as dialogic consciousnesses, are more complex than the adjectives or "traits" we assign them.

consciousness as dialogic, his or her understanding of the relationship of two people in dialogue will be more complex than the abstract diagrams proposed by many traditional linguistic approaches.¹⁸⁷ Bakhtin asked his readers to see an individual, or a consciousness, as a subjective point of view in dialogue with other peoples' subjective points of view rather than as an object or as a fixed image in someone's mind. He also emphasized the active relationship that the receiver of a discourse has with the speaker.

Bakhtin's dialogic concept of the consciousness takes away the masks that people use to claim objectivity when interpreting another person and his or her consciousness or personality. Bakhtin's metalinguistic analysis shows that in the dialogic world an individual can not be objectified or materialized as a fixed image and that dialogue is not an exchange of objective messages that simply need to be decoded by a passive receiver. Rather, in the dialogic world, people exist as consciousnesses in dialogic relationship with each other, always constrained by their own subjectivity (their own view on culture and the world), but also always influenced and shaped by other peoples' subjectivity.

¹⁸⁷ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 128. Morson and Emerson specifically mention the "telegraphic model formulated by Saussure and refined by (Roman) Jakobson":



Contrary to this model, Morson and Emerson write, "Bakhtin does not assume that authors formulate their thought and then 'encode' it by using the resources of language and genre." In this case the author fails to consider his or her work's potential meanings when read by various readers. In other words, such models do not accurately depict the I-thou dialogic relationship of the speaker and receiver.

III. The Dialogic Relationships of a Discourse

A. Introduction

Dialogue creates more than just a relationship between the speaker and the receiver of discourse. When a discourse is spoken by someone for someone else the discourse itself assumes dialogic relationships. In pointing out the particular dialogic relationships that a discourse acquires, Bakhtin again calls for an important distinction to be made between the abstract idea of language and its dialogic reality. He makes a distinction between a *sentence* as a unit of language and an *utterance* as a unit of speech communication. This distinction, he asserts, shows how a discourse stands in dialogic relationship to both its speaker and receiver.¹⁸⁸

B. The Dialogic Nature of an Utterance in Relationship to Its Speaker and Receiver

Language can not become dialogue unless someone says it to someone else. Two sentences can have a logical relationship to each other. They can agree or disagree with each other. However, a sentence must be embodied by someone for someone in dialogic relationship for dialogue to exist.¹⁸⁹ The sentence is merely an abstract unit of language. It is neutral, according to Bakhtin, because it has no expressive aspect, and therefore, it can not assume an active responsive position.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," 73–75. "The lack of a well-developed theory of the utterance as a unit of speech communication," Bakhtin writes, "leads to an imprecise distinction between the sentence and utterance, and frequently to a complete confusion of the two."

¹⁸⁹ Bakhtin, *Problems in Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 183, writes, "Language lives only in the dialogic interaction of those who make use of it." He continued, language "must be embodied, if a dialogic relationship is to arise between them and toward them."

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.* In reality, then, there are no sentences. All sentences that are spoken or written in communication are utterances because they all have an expressive aspect. Thus, it is not that Bakhtin is arguing that such "language" separated from a person speaking it actually exists. Rather, his point is to show that traditional linguistic approaches studied speech communication in such an abstract way. Linguistics, he writes, "distances itself from the actual dialogic relationships themselves." Metalinguistics, on the other hand, studies the dialogic relationships of speech communication. See Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 183.

An utterance, on the other hand, whether spoken or written, is a “link in the chain of speech communication” and assumes a *change in speaking subjects*.¹⁹¹ An utterance can be as simple as a word or a grunt, and as complex as a sentence or a string of many sentences. It is not the number of words that allows a sentence to become an utterance but the fact that it is embodied by someone who expresses his or her individual truth for someone else. In other words, all utterances become dialogic because they stand in dialogic relationship to a speaker and to a receiver. Utterances are not just words, but they are someone’s words spoken for someone else.

The speaker “manifests his own individuality in his style,” Bakhtin writes, and in “his world view” through the expression of his words.¹⁹² An utterance stands in dialogic relationship to a speaker as it *acquires an expressive aspect*, or an emotional evaluation of the speaker’s will and intent of his or her utterance.¹⁹³ When an utterance is embodied by a speaker with an *expressive aspect*, it can also *assume an active responsive position* to a listener or reader.¹⁹⁴ As the speaker begins to express his or her truth for someone else, the receiver of the utterance naturally enters into a dialogic relationship with the speaker and *also* with the speaker’s

¹⁹¹ Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 73. The *first constitutive feature* of the utterance as a unit of speech communication is that it must assume a *change of speaking subjects*.

¹⁹² Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 75, 85.

¹⁹³ Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 84–85, writes, “Any utterance is a link in the chain of speech communion,” because it is “the active position of the speaker.” He defines the expressive aspect as “the speaker’s emotional evaluation of the referentially semantic content of the utterance. The expressive aspect can have varying significance and varying degrees of force in various spheres of communication, but, Bakhtin writes, “it exists everywhere. There can be no such thing as an absolutely neutral utterance.”

¹⁹⁴ Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 84–85, writes that dialogic discourse “lives, as it were, beyond itself, in a living impulse” from within the speaker, but “toward” the person who receives it. Yet, as Bakhtin writes about discourse living “toward” others, he also speaks of the “authorial intent.” When participating in meaningful communication and dialogue, the receiver’s task is not to respond in any arbitrary way, but to always respond to the perceived authorial intent of the discourse.

utterance. The speaker does not just respond to the speaker and his or her consciousness, but also to the speaker's words.

The receiver of an utterance, according to Bakhtin, can only take a responsive position to an utterance once he or she is able to sense the *degree of finalization of the expressive aspect*.¹⁹⁵ *Sensing* (or interpreting) the *degree of finalization of the expressive aspect* is not a linguistic given, but rather a dialogic reality. The receiver of the utterance is only able to assume a dialogic relationship to an utterance because he or she is in dialogic relationship with the speaker. The receiver shares common assumptions about language and the world with the speaker with which he or she is in dialogic relationship, which allows the receiver to sense or interpret the speaker's expression.¹⁹⁶ Sensing the *finalization of the expressive aspect of the speaker* so that the receiver can make an active response to an utterance, for Bakhtin, is based on the receiver's ability to interpret three factors; the semantic exhaustiveness of the theme, the speaker's speech plan or speech will, and the chosen speech genre of the utterance.¹⁹⁷

i. The Semantic Exhaustiveness of the Theme (The Main Subject of the Discourse).

The speaker chooses to express his or herself through the *semantic exhaustiveness of the theme* of an utterance, or what Bakhtin also explains as the main subject of the utterance.¹⁹⁸ A mother,

¹⁹⁵ Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," 76. In addition to the change in speaking subjects, Bakhtin points to the *second essential feature* of an utterance, which is a *degree of finalization of the expressive aspect*. An *active responsive position* can not be taken toward an utterance, Bakhtin points out, unless the listener senses that the speaker "has said (or written) everything he wishes to say at a particular moment under particular circumstances."

¹⁹⁶ For instance, the receiver must be able to distinguish between literal and metaphorical usage of language.

¹⁹⁷ Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," 76–77. These three factors, Bakhtin notes, are inseparably linked to each other. Since Bakhtin notes that these three factors are inseparable from each other, his explanation of how these three factors work together to create a finalization of the expressive aspect and how the receiver understands this finalization is circular and ambiguous at times. This is another reason Bakhtin is confusing and frustrating to his readers.

¹⁹⁸ Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," 77. *Semantic Exhaustiveness* is one of Bakhtin's many under-
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for example, may choose to speak regarding the theme or subject of the state of her child's bedroom, the particulars of the girl's night out, or her feelings about her husband. The recipient of the utterance immediately takes a responsive position to the speaker's expression by sensing what the utterance is about. The exhaustiveness of the theme or topic of the speech can be almost complete in certain spheres of everyday life, Bakhtin explains, such as "in business circles" and in the "sphere of military and industrial commands" where the theme is in the form of "questions that are purely factual and similarly factual responses to them, requests, orders, and so forth." It is also relatively easy to understand in dialogues that take place between people who share intimate relationships such as the dialogues that take place within families and among friends.¹⁹⁹

In other words, understanding the theme or subject of the speaker, according to Bakhtin, is relatively easy in the ordinary dialogues that people participate in their every day lives. It is in the communities or cultures that people live within each day where strong dialogic relationships are established between people, and therefore, where shared assumptions about language and the surrounding world are taught and learned particular to the context of the community or culture. The communities or cultures we live in shape our understanding of language and our understanding of how we use language in communication with other people.

A boss, for example, asks for a report to be completed with a specific deadline and then congratulates his or her employees when it is successfully completed; parents talk to each other about their concern for their child's grades, health, or behavior; friends make plans to go to the game, to cook out, or help one another to complete a home remodeling project. In each of these

defined terms. He simply describes this term in one paragraph. The semantic exhaustiveness points to the ability of the receiver of an utterance to understand the topic or subject of a discourse based on how the speaker communicates and in what context the speaker is speaking.

¹⁹⁹ Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," 77. In the contexts of everyday ordinary conversations of life
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settings the relationships of the people in dialogue and the shared assumptions surrounding the particular context determine what the theme or subject of a person's discourse can be for meaningful communication to take place. The semantic exhaustiveness of the theme, or the certainty of the subject of the discourses, is easily understood because the receivers of the utterances have learned the culture from their experiences of living in relationship with the speakers.

In what Bakhtin calls the more "creative spheres," the semantic exhaustiveness and certainty of the theme, is less complete to its receivers.²⁰⁰ The recipient of an utterance must then work harder at understanding the theme or subject of the discourse because he or she does not understand or relate to the context or shared assumptions of the discourse. A person, for example, has to work harder at assuming a responsive dialogic position to a song or poem that uses metaphorical language to express a view. The recipient has to determine what theme the metaphor is really speaking about.

A person must also work harder at understanding the theme of a discourse written or spoken by someone of a different culture or time period, or someone speaking on an issue completely foreign to the knowledge experience of the recipient. The dialogic relationship between the speaker and the receiver is weak, which inhibits the ability of the receiver to sense the subject of the speaker's discourse. Yet, even in the "creative spheres," Bakhtin explains, the

with intimately known people, Bakhtin writes, "speech genres are maximally standard by nature."

²⁰⁰ Ibid. Bakhtin does not give any specific examples. He simply mentions "scientific" discourses. However, one can see how the semantic exhaustiveness of the theme is less apparent in artistic discourses, such as in songs and poems where the complex usage of metaphors causes the reader and listener to work harder at understanding what the author is really talking about.

receiver is able to work toward some minimum of certainty of what the speaker's theme or subject is, otherwise meaningful communication is not able to take place.²⁰¹

ii. The Speech Will of the Speaker. If the theme of the utterance is less certain in the mind of the receiver, the utterance can achieve a "relative finalization," Bakhtin points out, as the receiver simultaneously senses or interprets a second factor of speech expression, the *speech plan or speech will* of the discourse.²⁰² The *speech will* is the *authorial intent* of the utterance and it is inseparably linked to the semantic exhaustiveness of the theme. The speaker expresses the theme of the utterance under certain conditions or a particular context, but the speaker expresses his or her speech will or intent by also *creating* "certain conditions" and a context for the utterance, Bakhtin explains.²⁰³ The created context of the speech will is not created out of nothing. The speaker uses the assumptions about the contextual world and the usage of language that his or her communities or cultures share in order to communicate his or her speech will effectively to his or her receivers.

Again, until the receiver begins to sense or interpret what the speaker's speech will or intent is, the receiver can not assume a responsive position to the overall utterance. When we interpret a speaker's speech will, "We imagine to ourselves what the speaker *wishes* to say,"

²⁰¹ Ibid. The exhaustiveness of the theme must have a "certain minimum of finalization," Bakhtin writes, "which makes it possible" for communication to take place and for the reader to be in dialogic relationship with the utterance by occupying a responsive position.

²⁰² Again, Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," 77, does not mean a "finalization" of the semantic or semiotic meaning, but rather the "finalization of the utterance" in the sense that the speaker has "said all he wishes to say," and has now allowed the receiver of the utterance the responsive position. The speech plan, Bakhtin writes "determines choice, or theme of the subject, as well as the boundaries of the utterance, and the choice of the generic form in which the utterance will be constructed."

²⁰³ Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," 77–78. The author creates conditions such as "a particular problem posed in a particular way, on the basis of particular material with particular aims set by the author." Bakhtin writes, "In each utterance – from the single-word, everyday rejoinder to large, complex works of science or literature we embrace, understand and sense the speaker's *speech plan* or *speech will*."

Bakhtin writes. In other words, the speech will, or authorial intent, like the theme of the utterance, is not a given, but it has to be interpreted by the receiver of the utterance. The receiver is able to sense what the speaker wishes to say not only because he or she understands the linguistic meaning of the words, but because he or she shares a dialogic relationship with the speaker and shares common assumptions about the contextual world and the context of the created conditions of the speaker's speech will.

The sentence, "The sun has risen" for example, is completely comprehensible on a linguistic level. Someone can understand the *language meaning* or linguistic meaning of these words, that is, the relationship of the words within the sentence.²⁰⁴ A person knows what a "sun" is and what it means for a "sun" to have "risen." Such a "sentence" may have "a finality of meaning and a finality of grammatical form," but its finality of meaning is only abstract by nature. A person may not know if these words, for instance, are merely informative, or if they are meant to cause the receiver to act in a certain way. Therefore, "In no way can we assume a responsive position with respect to this individual sentence," Bakhtin writes, because "we" do not know the speech will or intent of these words. It is unknown who said it, in what context it was spoken, or if the speaker has said everything he or she wished to say.

An utterance, on the other hand, begins to reveal a *speech will* or authorial intent as it creates a context that the receiver has shared assumptions about, and in a context about which the receiver also has shared assumptions.²⁰⁵ If instead of encountering the sentence, "The sun has risen," one received the more finalized expression, "The sun has risen. It's time to get up" from a particular person, a parent, roommate, or spouse who was waking one up to go to school or

²⁰⁴ Therefore, we can even understand its "*possible* role in an utterance," Bakhtin points out.

²⁰⁵ Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," 82.

work, then one can assume an active responsive position to the utterance. Because this expression is embodied by a particular person under particular circumstances for another person, and because it creates further context and uses a shared assumption – “it is time to get up!” –it allows a receiver who is in dialogic relationship with the speaker to sense or interpret the speech will of the utterance.²⁰⁶ The *responsive understanding* could be, “Yes, it really is time to get up.” or “The sun has risen. But it’s still very early. Let’s get some more sleep.”²⁰⁷

Furthermore, since all utterances are spoken or written in a specific context and under particular circumstances with a particular speech will, all utterances, Bakhtin points out, are unrepeatable. Every utterance expresses an individual’s truth or point of view, but it always does so in response to another speaker and his or her discourse within its own particular circumstances.²⁰⁸ Even utterances that contain identical words are unrepeatable because they are always spoken in response to a different utterance or in a different context from one another.²⁰⁹

“Thalassa, Thalassa!” spoken by 10,000 Greeks in *Xenophon*, for example, can be seen as two different utterances that each have a particular context that expresses a particular point of view.²¹⁰ Upon seeing the refreshing water of the Black Sea thousands of Grecian soldiers shout,

²⁰⁶ Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 77–78. The immediate participants in communication orient themselves “with respect to the situation and the preceding utterance, easily and quickly grasp the speaker’s *speech plan*, his *speech will*,” Bakhtin writes, and “from the very beginning of his words they sense the developing whole of the utterance.” In other words, we begin to understand and sense the speaker’s speech plan by recognizing the context or the conditions in which the utterance is spoken.

²⁰⁷ Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 83.

²⁰⁸ See Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 94, writes, “The speaker is not Adam, and therefore the subjects of his speech itself inevitably becomes the arena where his opinions meet those of his partners (in a conversation or dispute about some everyday event) or other viewpoints, world views, trends, theories and so forth (in the sphere of cultural communication).”

²⁰⁹ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of Prosaics*, 126. “Two verbally identical utterances never *mean* the same thing,” Morson and Emerson write, “if only because the reader or listener confronts them twice and reacts differently the second time. Context is never the same.”

²¹⁰ Here Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 85–86, explains, “We are not dealing not with the
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“Thalassa, Thalassa! (The Sea, the Sea!).” The first utterance, “Thalassa,” is spoken in the context of initially seeing the Sea for the first time. It expresses the joy of thousands of Greek soldiers who have journeyed across the arid climate on their way home from Babylon and now see the refreshing water of “the Sea!” The second utterance, although the same word as the first utterance, is spoken in a different context. It is not spoken in immediate context of seeing the Sea, but in the immediate context of the first spoken utterance, “Thalassa!” While it may be the same word and have the same lexical meaning as the first utterance, the repetition of the word stands in a different dialogic relationship to its speakers as it adds an even more emphatic nuance to the expressive aspect than the first utterance.²¹¹

Bakhtin’s understanding of a speaker’s speech shows not only how the speaker is in dialogic relationship to an utterance as he or she expresses his or her intent, but also how a person is able to assume a dialogic relationship to the speech will and interpret the intent of the utterance only because he or she is in dialogic relationship with the speaker. While the speech will or intent of the utterance is able to be understood or interpreted, it is only because of the dialogic relationship established between the speaker and the receiver that meaningful communication takes place. The dialogic relationship between a speaker and a receiver is a major factor in the creation of the necessary shared assumptions concerning their language, their surrounding context of their world, and the context created by the speech will of the speaker.

individual word as a unit of language and not with the *meaning* of this word but with a complete utterance and with a *specific sense*—the content of a given utterance.” These utterances are spoken by Grecian soldiers who have fought in Babylon and are now returning home after a long journey over a desert terrain they come to a hill and see the Black Sea.

²¹¹ Bakhtin does not explore this example in any detail. However, one could say, for example, that the first mention of “Thalassa” suggests an expression such as, “Look, it is the Sea!” The second utterance suggests a slightly different and more emphatic expression in the context of the first utterance such as, “Yes, it really is the Sea!”

Thus, being in dialogic relationship with the speaker enables the receiver to be in dialogic relationship to the utterance and to take a responsive position to it.

iii. The Chosen Speech Genre of the Speaker. The *speech will*, or context of the utterance, Bakhtin points out is shaped by the chosen *speech genre*, the third factor that determines the finalization of the expressive aspect, which allows the receiver to take an active responsive position to the whole utterance.²¹² All of our utterances are “manifested” by “definite and relatively stable typical *forms of construction of the whole*,” which Bakhtin calls *speech genres*.²¹³ Speech genres are codes of past spoken discourses that have become “crystallized” into generic forms by a culture to serve as a bridge for new discourse. We unconsciously choose and use these established forms of speech in new ways for our own purposes all the time to communicate our *speech wills*.²¹⁴

“Our repertoire of oral (and written) speech genres,” Bakhtin writes, “is rich.”²¹⁵ Speech genres are so diverse because they are dependent on the context of the dialogue and the relationships of those in dialogue with each other. They are formed in dialogue by culture out of

²¹² Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 78. The speech will of the utterance Bakhtin explains, is “manifested in the particular speech genre” that the speaker chooses to express his or her utterance.

²¹³ Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 78. See also Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 291. They explain that Bakhtin was not talking about literary genres. Literary genres are themselves a type of speech genre. Morson and Emerson point out how one of Bakhtin’s closest friends and colleagues, Voloshinov calls speech genres “life genres.”

²¹⁴ Bakhtin’s notes in one of his last manuscripts, *Methodology for the Human Sciences*, 165, reads, “Content as new; form as stereotyped, congealed, old (familiar) content. Form serves as a necessary bridge to the new, still unknown content.”

²¹⁵ Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 78. We use them confidently *in practice*, Bakhtin points out, and it is quite possible for us not even to suspect their existence *in theory*.

the necessity to communicate in the social and cultural activities and events.²¹⁶ We know how to make use of these different speech genres before we understand their lexical composition and grammatical structure. “We are given these speech genres in almost the same way that we are given our native language,” Bakhtin points out, “which we master fluently long before we study grammar.”²¹⁷ Speech communication would be “almost impossible,” he argues, if speech genres “did not exist and we had not mastered them, if we had to originate them during the speech process and construct each utterance at will for the first time.”²¹⁸

Among the very basic speech genres, Bakhtin points to “greetings, farewells, congratulations, all kinds of wishes, information about health, business and so forth.”²¹⁹ In addition to these standard speech genres, Bakhtin noted how other more *free* and *more creative* speech genres exist in the more intimate speech conversations of everyday life. People use speech genres all the time in their dialogues that take place with family members around the dinner table, among friends at a party, or among associations at work or at clubs.²²⁰

While we use speech genres more freely and creatively in our intimate settings and relationships, they are not creative in the sense that they are created out of nothing. Speech

²¹⁶ See Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 78. Speech genres, Bakhtin points out, “depend on the situation, social position, and personal interrelations of the participants in the communication.” See also Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 292. Morson and Emerson write, “Because each culture engages in a vast array of social activities practiced by many different social groups in a variety of circumstances each culture possesses a vast number of speech genres.”

²¹⁷ Ibid. Bakhtin writes, “We know our native language—its lexical composition and grammatical structure—not from dictionaries and grammars but from concrete utterances that we hear and that we ourselves reproduce in live speech communication with people around us.”

²¹⁸ Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 79.

²¹⁹ Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 78. “Good morning.” “See you later.” “How are you doing?” “What’s up?” “What are your plans for the day?” “Drive safely.” “Here’s the kick.” “We go to the bottom of the third inning”

²²⁰ For example, “This is good. What is in it?” “You should have seen what happened at work today” “As I was saying . . .” “In other words . . .” “Relax, it is going to be all right. “ “Tomorrow will be a new day.”

genres, like all aspects of our language, are formed by the communities or cultures we live in by the necessity to communicate particular expressions for particular cultural settings. We master speech genres by hearing them spoken in certain places and at certain times, and then we incorporate them into our own speech expressions.

Speech genres become new and creative, then, in how we *re-accentuate* them for our own expressive purposes.²²¹ Bakhtin used the term *re-accentuate* to show how a person uses a learned speech genre from his or her cultural experience in his or her own way for his or her own purpose. Some speech genres have a “certain expressive intonation,” he explains. A speaker can *re-accentuate* such speech genres by offering a “slight nuance” of the given expressive intonation. A person can speak with a “drier or more respectful tone, a colder or warmer one; one can introduce the intonation of joy, and so forth.”²²² The re-accentuation of a speech genre is what expresses the speaker’s individuality in dialogue. It also shows the speaker to be in dialogic relationship with the words that have already been given to him or her by his or her culture.²²³

The more freely and intimately we use speech genres, Bakhtin points out, the more we *re-accentuate* them and use specific *expressive tones* to communicate our own evaluative attitude.²²⁴ The speaker or author chooses to finalize his or her expression with various expressive tones or attitudes such as ironic, indignant, sarcastic, or sympathetic, which help

²²¹ Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 80, asserts that “genres must be fully mastered in order to be manipulated freely.”

²²² Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 79.

²²³ Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 79–80, writes, “This is typical in speech communication: thus, for example, the generic form of greeting can move from the official sphere into the sphere of familiar communication, that is, it can be used with parodic-ironic re-accentuation.”

²²⁴ This is what J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (2d ed.; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975) describes as the “illocutionary force” of words in speech acts; See also James W. Voelz, *What Does This Mean: Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Post-Modern World* (2d ed.; St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1995), 276–80.

determine the “relation of the utterance to the *speaker himself*” and to the “*other* participants of speech communication.”²²⁵ “Excellent!” “Good for you!” “How charming!” “Shame on you!” “That is revolting!” and “You Blockhead!” are speech genres that carry evaluative tones of “praise, approval, rapture, reproof, or abuse,” Bakhtin writes.²²⁶

Again, we understand and are able to respond to the expressive intonations of another’s speech genre in real life dialogue naturally and most of the time unconsciously because we understand the context of our dialogue and we communicate with other people under learned and shared assumptions about speech genres. “Peace!” and “Freedom!” carry exclamatory tones in specific sociopolitical contexts.²²⁷ In written speech we also “guess and sense” the evaluative attitude of the speaker “precisely because of the *context* that frames the other’s speech, or by means of the extra-verbal situation that suggests the appropriate expression,” Bakhtin points out.²²⁸ “What joy!” is a speech genre that can show an attitude of elation toward someone or something. However, if spoken or written in response to the utterance, “He died,” Bakhtin writes, it could express an “ironic or bitterly sarcastic tone.”²²⁹

Bakhtin’s distinction of sentence and utterance shows that when words are used in dialogue they acquire dialogic relationships with both their speakers and their receivers. When words are embodied by people they acquire an expressive aspect that is communicated for someone else so

²²⁵ Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 84. This is another difference between the sentence and the utterance. The sentence as a unit of language has grammatical intonations such as explanatory, distributive, enumerative, interrogative and so forth. Utterances, however, have an expressive intonation that communicates the speaker’s evaluative attitude toward something or someone. See Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 90.

²²⁶ Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 85.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 93.

²²⁹ Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 85. When reading a text, the reader may have to consider the evaluative tone of two speakers; first the character who may be speaking the words, “What joy!” but also the author
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that they can respond. The expressive aspect reaches a degree of finalization as the speaker chooses to speak about a theme, with a speech will that expresses intent and with a speech genre that carries an expressive tone. The receiver of the utterance senses the finalization of the expressive aspect because he or she has learned shared assumptions about the world and about how to speak from his or her communities or cultures, because he or she has entered into dialogic relationship with a specific speaker, and also because he or she has been drawn into dialogic relationship with the utterance.

C. The Dialogic Nature of an Utterance in Relationship to Other Utterances

When a sentence is embodied by someone as a speech expression, it stands in dialogic relationship to more than just the person who speaks it and to the person who receives it. All utterances exist in dialogic relationship to other spoken utterances because all utterances respond, Bakhtin points out, “in one form or another to someone else’s utterances that precedes it.”²³⁰ However, utterances acquire dialogic relationships to more than just the utterances that they directly respond to. Our speech “is filled with other’s words that carry with them their own expression, their own evaluative tone,” Bakhtin points out, which “we assimilate, rework, and re-accentuate” for our own purposes.²³¹ Therefore, utterances assume dialogic relationships to past spoken utterances as speakers incorporate them in their own discourse for their own purpose.²³²

who is depicting the speech of that character.

²³⁰ Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 94. An utterance is always related, Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 76, writes, to “other work-utterances: both those to which it responds and those that respond to it.”

²³¹ Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 93, writes, “The speaker is not the biblical Adam, dealing only with virgin and still unnamed objects, giving them names for the first time.” The words a person speaks and the subject of his or her expression “has already been articulated, disputed, elucidated, and evaluated in various ways. Various viewpoints, world views, and trends cross, converge, and diverge in it.”

²³² Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*. All utterances contain *reported speech* or already spoken utterances of other people. Certain words of every utterance can be shown with the proper metalinguistic analysis to
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Since all utterances contain the utterances of other peoples' utterances, the way a speaker makes use of other people's utterances reveals the strength of the dialogic relationship to the utterance or utterances that it contains.²³³ Bakhtin distinguishes between *single-voiced discourse*, which contains another person's words, but does not acknowledge so, and *double-voiced discourse*, which contains another person's words and acknowledges these words as someone else's words, making use of them for the speaker's own purpose. Dialogic discourse becomes *double-voiced discourse* when it has a "twofold direction." It is directed toward another person in dialogue, but also "toward *another's discourse*, toward *someone else's speech*."²³⁴

i. Single-Voiced Discourse. While all utterances contain already spoken words, *single-voiced discourse* occurs when the speaker does not know that the words of his or her utterance have been spoken before by someone else, or when the speaker simply does not care to acknowledge to his or her listeners that his or her utterances contains the words and sources of other utterances.²³⁵ In such cases, the speaker, whether intentionally or unintentionally, wants the listener to hear his or her utterance as unmediated, direct discourse for his or her own purpose. The speaker directs his or her speech toward another person and perhaps even toward that person's words, but not toward the words or utterances that he or she is using within his or her

be cited or reported from other contexts and other people. Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," 93. "The topic of the speaker's speech, regardless of what this topic may be," Bakhtin writes "does not become the object of the speech for the first time in any given utterance; a given speaker is not the first to speak about it."

²³³ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 146. Utterances can have strong or weak dialogic relationships in the same that two consciousnesses in dialogue can strengthen or weaken their dialogic relationship. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 182. The strength and complexity of the dialogic relationship between two utterances, Bakhtin argues, depends on how two utterances are "juxtaposed" and "counterposed" to each other.

²³⁴ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 185–86. The determining factor of whether a discourse is *double-voiced* or *single-voiced*, Bakhtin explains, is defined by its relationship "to other discourses within the same context or the same speech."

²³⁵ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 146–47. Morson and Emerson explain that single-voiced discourse uses other peoples' words "without quotations" hiding the fact that someone else has spoken the words.

own discourse. The speaker wants the listener to consider what he or she is saying only, and does not want the listener to hear any other voice as a part of his or her spoken discourse.²³⁶

A person may, for example, try to persuade someone that God is good. In doing so, he or she may allude to a particular passage in Scripture that speaks to God's goodness. However, the speaker does not quote the particular Scripture passage or even make known that he or she is using words from Scripture to make his or her point. As the speaker is defending that God is good, he or she speaks in a way that ignores the authority or perspective of Scripture as if it is his or her opinion only that matters that God is good.

Under metalinguistic analysis, we detect what resembles "the scaffolding" of other utterances, but these other utterances, Bakhtin writes, are "not incorporated into the architectural whole even though it is indispensable and taken into account by the builder."²³⁷ A person who knows Scripture may detect that the speaker's defense that God is good has incorporated Scripture's words into his or her speech. That person can then recognize that the speaker is using *single-voiced* discourse since the speaker has not acknowledged that his or her words are from God's Word.

Single-voiced discourses are dialogic in one sense because they respond to some other utterance by incorporating it into its own speech design. However, the dialogic relationships of *single-voiced discourses* are weakened toward the utterances they use and incorporate for their own speech will. They are *monologic* toward the incorporated already spoken words, Bakhtin

²³⁶ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 148. *Single-voiced*, direct, unmediated discourse "do not take into account the already-spoken-about quality of the object, or, at least, not in a way that implicitly challenges the authority of their speech."

²³⁷ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 187; Morson and Emerson, *Creation of Prosaics*, 148.

points out, because they *do not recognize* or create dialogue with the already spoken words as a part of their creative purpose.²³⁸

ii. Double-Voiced Discourse. Perhaps Bakhtin's greatest contribution toward the study of how people use words is his analysis of *double-voiced discourse*. *Double-voiced discourse* occurs when the speaker not only uses another person's already spoken words, but acknowledges those words and creates dialogue with those words.²³⁹ In *double-voiced* discourse "the sounding of a second voice," Morson and Emerson point out, "is a part of the project of the utterance."²⁴⁰ *Double-voiced discourse* strengthens the dialogic relationship toward the incorporated utterances because it recognizes and dialogues with the incorporated utterances. It presupposes an actual dialogue where one person's speech is tested and used in dialogue toward another person and toward another person's discourse.²⁴¹

Double-voiced discourse naturally occurs when two people are in dialogue with each other. One person may say, "It is a beautiful day today." The other person could then respond, "It is a beautiful day today." In this simple dialogue, the second speaker has used the first person's exact words to express his or her own point of view. Yet, these same words have been given a new meaning because they have been embodied by a different person. The same *sentence* has

²³⁸ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 187. "Direct referentially oriented discourse recognizes only itself and its object, to which it strives to be maximally adequate."

²³⁹ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 146–47. Morson and Emerson explain that double-voiced discourse uses other people's words "with quotations" highlighting the fact that the speech is incorporating someone else's spoken words.

²⁴⁰ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 149.

²⁴¹ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 151, 185. See also Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 189. It is the "chief hero" of dialogue, according to Bakhtin, because it makes use of someone else's discourse for his or her own purpose "by inserting a new semantic intention into a discourse which already has, and which retains, an intention of its own."

become a different *utterance* re-accentuated with different evaluative tone. The word “is” has particularly been re-accentuated with a different, perhaps more emphatic evaluative tone.

Double-voiced discourse can also occur when two people are in dialogue with each other and one of the people uses the words of a third person who is not present in the current dialogue for his or her purpose. In this case, the dialogic relationship between discourses, Bakhtin points out, becomes internal.²⁴² One person may say, “It is a beautiful day today.” Another person may respond by saying, “Yes, the weather man said, “Today would be a beautiful day for our city.” Another person could respond by singing John Denver’s lyrics, “Sunshine on my shoulders makes happy . . . Sunshine almost always makes me high!”²⁴³

Multiple dialogues and multiple dialogic relationships are seen to exist when metalinguistic analysis is applied to the study of such double-voiced discourse.²⁴⁴ There are the obvious dialogues between the people speaking to each other about the weather and between their discourses. There are also internal dialogues that exist between the second speaker and the weather man’s words concerning the weather for the day, and the third speaker and John Denver’s words concerning the positive affects of seeing and feeling the sunshine. Only a metalinguistic approach, Bakhtin argues, can begin to appreciate the complex dialogism of the spoken word and all of its dialogic relationships when it becomes double-voiced.

²⁴² Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 138, write, “The complexities created by the already-spoken-about quality of the word, and by the listener’s active understanding, create an *internal dialogism* of the word.”

²⁴³ John Denver, Dick Kniss, Mike Taylor, “Sunshine on my Shoulders,” produced by Milt Okun; side 2, track 3 of *Poems, Prayers & Promises* (RCA, 1973).

²⁴⁴ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 138, write, “In this case, not only is there the internal dialogism of the whole utterance but also a ‘microdialogue’ in that word.”

iii. Dynamics within Double-voiced Discourse. People use a variety of styles of *double-voiced discourse* in the same way they use a variety of speech genres to convey the purpose and expressive intent of their utterances. These styles can not be studied by traditional linguistic approaches that only study the relationship that words have within an utterance. In addition to distinguishing between *single-voiced discourses* that do not acknowledge someone else's already spoken words and *double-voiced discourses*, which do acknowledge another person's already spoken words, Bakhtin offered a number of classifications and distinctions to describe the varieties of double-voiced discourses that people speak.²⁴⁵

Bakhtin distinguishes, first of all, between *passive* and *active* double-voiced discourses. He highlights two qualities of double-voiced discourse that determine whether it is passive or active – the *objectification* of the already spoken words used by the speaker, and the *internal dialogism* of the already spoken words to the speaker and his or her words. When objectification of the already spoken words increases, Bakhtin points out, the internal dialogism of those words with the speaker who is incorporating them and with his or her discourse decreases.²⁴⁶

1. Passive Double-Voiced Discourse. Double-voiced discourse is *passive* when the speaker objectifies another's words so that he or she is in control of the incorporated utterance. The speaker allows the other words to be heard in his or her own speech so that he or she can

²⁴⁵ Bakhtin, *Problems in Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 186. *Double-voiced discourse*, Bakhtin argues, must be examined and classified with metalinguistic analysis and categories. "The very fact of the existence of double-directed discourses," he writes, "creates for us the necessity of providing a full and exhaustive classification of discourses" which is "not taken into account by stylistics, lexicology, or semantics."

²⁴⁶ See Morson and Emerson, *Creation of Prosaics*, 149–55. Morson and Emerson, *Creation of Prosaics*, 154–55, describe how double-voiced discourse moves from being passive to active as the objectification of another's speech is reduced, which results in a greater internal dialogism between the two discourse. When speaking about active double-voiced discourse they write, "Let us gradually reduce the 'objectification' of the target voice and allow it to resist" what the speaker is doing with it. They then acknowledge that because of the reduction of objectification, "Active double-voiced words are internally dialogized to a greater degree."

give his or her own interpretation of those words.²⁴⁷ In other words, the double-voiced discourse is *passive* not because the speaker is passive, but because the already spoken words of another person, which are being incorporated by the speaker, are passive.²⁴⁸ Bakhtin highlights the two categories of stylization and parody as examples of how a speaker speaks with *passive double-voiced discourse*.

In stylization, the speaker, or stylizer, incorporates another person's utterance into his or her own utterance in a way that shows agreement with the previous spoken discourse. Bakhtin labeled stylization as *unidirectional* because there is a "merging of the author's and the other person's voice."²⁴⁹ A stylization of an utterance occurs, for example, if a person who recognizes that God has blessed him or her in life would say, "God is good," and then someone else, who has been endowed with great wealth responds, "God *is* good. I am rich. I drive my dream car and live in a mansion. God is good."

In this example a speaker has taken someone else's discourse, tested it, and responded to it with agreement by providing a reason for why he or she agrees with the idea that God is good.²⁵⁰ Because the speaker has objectified the already spoken words of another person, the internal

²⁴⁷ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of Prosaics*, 150. The speaker, Morson and Emerson, *Creation of Prosaics*, 150, write, "uses the other's discourse for his own purposes, and if he allows it to be heard and sensed, that is because his purposes require it to be."

²⁴⁸ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 197. In passive double-voiced discourse the speaker takes, Bakhtin writes, "someone else's meek and defenseless discourse and installs his own interpretation in it, forcing it to serve his own new purposes."

²⁴⁹ See Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 198. See also Morson and Emerson, *Creation of Prosaics*, 150. Stylization is *unidirectional* Morson and Emerson point out because the "tasks" of the two utterances are "essentially the same." The speaker, they write, "adopts the discourse of an earlier speaker or writer whose way of speaking or writing is regarded as essentially correct and in accord with the task to be accomplished."

²⁵⁰ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of Prosaics*, 151. As Morson and Emerson point out, "agreement, no less than disagreement, is a dialogic relation. . . . The crucial point is that the stylizer constructs his utterance so that the voice of the other will be heard to sound within his own."

dialogism between the already spoken words and the speaker's discourse has been minimized.²⁵¹ The second utterance stands in a stylized dialogic relationship to the first, and the first utterance is *passive*, being heard only in light of and under the influence of the second utterance.

Parody, like stylization, is double-voiced discourse that allows the reader to "sense the discourse of another" as the speaker uses another's words for his or her own purpose. However, parody differs from stylization, Bakhtin points out, in that the speaker "introduces into that discourse a semantic dimension that is directly opposed to the original one."²⁵² He labels parodistic discourse as *varidirectional*, because the aspirations of the speaker's discourse and the already spoken words he or she is incorporating pulls "in different directions."²⁵³

A parodic response to the utterance, "God is good," for example, may be, "God is *good*? Yeah, sure God is good. My wife left me, I lost my job, and the doctor says I have a spot on my lung. God is good!" In this case the speaker has taken someone else's discourse, tested it, and given his or her reasons for his or her disagreement toward the idea that God is good. The speaker of this parodic discourse, like the speaker of the stylized discourse, has cast his or her shadow of objectification over another person's point of view, which has reduced the internal dialogism of his or her words with the incorporated speech of the other person. The second utterance stands in parodic dialogic relationship to the first, and again, the first utterance is *passive*, being heard only in light of the second parodic utterance.

²⁵¹ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 189, writes, "The stylizer uses another's discourse precisely as other, and in doing so casts a slight shadow of objectification over it." Yet, it is important to also point out that Bakhtin distinguishes stylization from single-voiced discourse by adding, "To be sure, the discourse does not become an object." The speaker is still working with another's point of view, but with a "certain shadow of objectification" on that very point of view.

²⁵² Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 152.

²⁵³ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 194. "In all possible varieties of parodistic discourse the relationship between the author's and the other person's aspirations remains the same: these aspirations pull in (continued next page)

2. Active Double-voiced Discourse. Bakhtin also explains how people speak in *active double-voiced discourse*. A person speaks with *active double-voiced discourse* when he or she chooses to reduce his or her objectification of another person's already spoken words, and therefore, increase the internal dialogism of his or her words with the incorporated speech. In other words, when a speaker chooses to speak in *active double-voiced discourse*, he or she leaves another's words "outside" his or her own speech, like a single-voiced discourse would do, but he or she still speaks with the intention of addressing another person's discourse. Thus, unlike single-voiced discourse, in *active double-voiced discourse* the speaker does take into account another's speech.²⁵⁴

Active double-voiced discourse is extremely common in every day dialogue, Bakhtin points out. It is used and experienced when people simply respond to each other's statements, acknowledging each other's already spoken words, but not making use of them for their own purposes.²⁵⁵ If one person says, "God is good," another person may simply respond to this a statement by asking another question such as, "Which god?" or "Why do you think so?"

When speaking *active double-voiced discourse*, the speaker may also "cast" what Bakhtin calls a *sideward glance* at another person's speech. In so doing, the speaker intends to show agreement or disagreement with another person's discourse, but he or she does not control the other person's words as in the case of stylization and parody. Rather, the speaker shows his agreement or disagreement to another person's discourse while allowing the other person's

different directions, in contrast to unidirectional aspirations of stylization . . ."

²⁵⁴ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 155, explain active double-voiced words as "taking a sideward glance" to mean that the speaker's discourse "seems to cringe in the presence of the listener's word." It takes a "sideward glance at a possible answer."

²⁵⁵ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 195. In speaking about how often active double-voiced discourse occurs in everyday speech, Bakhtin writes, "Such is the nature of discourse . . . in most cases in the (continued next page)

words to remain outside of his or her discourse.²⁵⁶ If a person said, “God is good,” another person may, for instance, take a sideward glance that agrees with this statement by saying, “That is why I believe in Him.” Another person may take sideward glance at the same statement in order to communicate a disagreeing or polemical view by saying, “So that is why there is so much suffering in the world!”²⁵⁷

People speak active double-voiced discourse also when they anticipate what other people may say about them or their speech, Bakhtin explains. When people make confessions they often create *loopholes*, as polemical blows toward another’s anticipated response.²⁵⁸ A loophole, Bakhtin writes “is the retention for oneself of the possibility of altering the ultimate, final meaning of one’s own words.”²⁵⁹ A person, for example, may confess the many sins of his recent past to his Christian friend, and if he was anticipating his Christian friend to respond with the words, “Why have you done all of this? Don’t you know how good God has been to you?” the

rejoinder of a dialogue as well.”

²⁵⁶ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 195, writes, “Another’s discourse in this case is not reproduced with a new intention, but it acts upon, influences, and in one way or another determines the author’s discourse, while itself remaining outside of it.” See Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 154. Morson and Emerson distinguish parody – passive double-voiced discourse from active double-voiced discourse. In active double-voiced discourse the utterance, they point out, “is still in the ‘arena of battle,’ as it was before, but now the parodist is no longer in control” of the other person’s words.

²⁵⁷ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 196, writes, “Here belong, in everyday speech, all words that ‘make digs at others’ and all ‘barbed’ words. We see *active double-voiced* discourse whenever a speaker uses ‘barbed’ words or makes ‘digs at others.’” See also Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 155, who write, “The speaker not only adds his own semantic dimension to another’s words, but when showing dialogical disagreement, the speaker strikes a ‘polemic view’ against the other person’s discourse.”

²⁵⁸ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 196. Among active double-voiced discourses, Bakhtin writes, “belongs all self-deprecating overblown speech that repudiates itself in advance, speech with a thousand reservations, concession, loopholes, and the like.” This kind of speech, Bakhtin writes, “literally cringes in the presence or the anticipation of someone else’s word, reply, or objection.” Bakhtin, in his analysis of Dostoevsky, shows how his characters often carried on conversations in their heads with possible responses toward their thoughts. In these cases the dialogue itself is hidden, but the character takes a sideward glance at another person’s possible words. See his analysis in *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 204–11.

²⁵⁹ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 233. “The hero who repents and condemns himself,” Bakhtin points out, “actually wants only to provoke praise and acceptance by another.”

speaker may create a *loophole*, a polemical view against this anticipated response. The speaker may follow his confession with a loophole such as, “but look at what has happened to me. I lost my job and was diagnosed with cancer!” In other words, the speaker strikes a polemical view against the possible assertion that God is good by inferring that God has not been good to him, and in so doing, creates an excuse for his sin.²⁶⁰

Sometimes the speaker’s polemical point of view is hidden, Bakhtin explains. The speaker hides his or her polemical barb by actively using a third person’s discourse against the other person and his or her discourse. If someone who was extremely wealthy, for example uttered the words, “God is good,” someone using the hidden polemic discourse might say, “Yes! God has filled the hungry with good things, but has sent rich away empty handed.” In this case the speaker is using the discourse of two different speakers – the utterance of the rich person and the utterance of Mary as quoted from Luke 1:53. The speaker chooses to decrease his or her objectification of both utterances that he or she incorporates, and therefore, increase the internal dialogism of these two incorporated utterances with each other and with his or her own words.

The speaker uses Mary’s words to cast a *sideward glance* at a rich person’s attitude toward his or her personal wealth. The speaker does not quote the rich person’s already spoken words, but refers to them and responds to them. He or she uses Mary’s words as a barb, a *hidden polemic*, against the rich person’s utterance that “God is good.” The speaker does so by agreeing with the rich person that God is good, but in a way that uses a third person’s words to strike a hidden polemical blow toward the assumed rich person’s attitude and his or her words.²⁶¹

²⁶⁰ In this case the dialogue of two utterances is hidden. Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 159, note how Bakhtin shows the Underground Man to continually create loopholes and polemicize with “the impressions his words might make, and seems to mock and retract what he has said before saying it.”

²⁶¹ This exemplifies the point that Bakhtin’s categories are not meant to be rigid, but rather are meant to
(continued next page)

There are many examples of *active double-voiced discourses* written literature in polemically colored autobiographies where the writer takes a sideward glance toward another person's words. Teresa of Avila, for example, wrote her autobiography under the threat of the Inquisition to give an account of her teachings. While at times she may not have directly used the language of her accusers she takes a sideward glance at them. She refers to the priests to whom she was obedient in her confessions and teachings. She expresses that she is open to being taught on a certain subject or willing to listen to someone else speak concerning a certain subject. In her writing, Teresa of Avila is responding to her accusers with a polemical view demonstrating that what she is accused of is not true even though she does not explicitly state the accusations made against her.²⁶²

Bakhtin's distinctions of *single-voiced* and *double-voiced discourses* and his categories of *active* and *passive double-voiced* discourses show how complex dialogue becomes when dialogic relationships are recognized and studied. By using metalinguistic analysis we see how dialogue is permeated with dialogic relationships that impact the way we communicate. Recognizing and studying these dialogic relationships, especially the ones that exist between utterances, reveals important insight into *how* we communicate with one another in dialogue. Bakhtin's analysis of the various ways in which people use *single-voiced* and *active* and *passive double-voiced discourses* shows how we use already spoken words of other people all the time and how the way we use other peoples' words reveals the often unconscious aims and tasks of our words.

provide metalinguistic spectrum that enables the dialogic reader to begin examining the many dialogic relationships that exist in one utterance – the dialogic relationships that exist with other utterances and other speakers, as well as the dialogic relationships that exist between speakers who have already spoken words with anticipated hearers.

²⁶² Thank you to Rev. Dr. David Schmitt, professor of homiletics at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis for this example.

IV. Conclusion: The Value of Metalinguistic Analysis of Dialogue

Bakhtin shows that metalinguistic analysis is valuable first and foremost because it allows the reader to affirm and describe the dialogic reality of language. Bakhtin's focus on the various sets of dialogic relationships that occur in speech communication and his metalinguistic analysis of these dialogic relationships explain why he insisted on a theory that describes the dialogic reality of speech discourses, or utterances, as opposed to the abstract nature of a sentence. His dialogic theory of the utterance argued that language involves communication and, therefore, it is active and interactive, not objective and inert.

Thus, his approach to language is different from traditional linguistic theories because he defined an utterance based on the dialogic reality of language and not according to the abstract theory that Saussure and other traditional linguistic approaches used to describe language.²⁶³

Speech discourses contain more than a code of semiotic meanings and logical syntactical relationships of words within the discourse, Bakhtin points out.²⁶⁴ In dialogue, speech discourses acquire dialogic relationships with their speakers, with their receivers, and with other already spoken discourses. "Impermissible is any materialization of the word," Bakhtin argues because "its nature is also dialogic."²⁶⁵ A purely linguistic understanding of a speech discourse fails to

²⁶³ Bakhtin argues that Saussure's telegraphic model and other traditional linguistic models distort the actual picture of speech communication by also viewing the speech discourse (*la parole*) only in its "an abstract" sense and not in terms of its dialogic reality.

²⁶⁴ Linguistic approaches, Bakhtin contended, view a speech discourse as "only an individual combination of purely linguistic (lexical and grammatical) forms." See also Morson and Emerson, *Creation of Prosaics*, 128. They write that linguistic approaches understand a speech discourse as an objectified "message" that is "formulated by the speaker, encoded, and then decoded by the listener." In explaining Bakhtin's response to Saussure's telegraphic model, Morson and Emerson point out, "we do not first passively decode and then decide how to respond; rather, we engage in the act of active understanding, for which passive understanding is necessary." See Bakhtin, *Speech Genres*, 81. Bakhtin writes that traditional linguistic approaches deal "primarily with the transmission of ready-made communication using a ready-made code." See also Bakhtin, *Notes Made in 1970-71*, 149. "Live speech," Bakhtin writes, is "first created in the process of transmission, and there is, in essence, no code."

²⁶⁵ Bakhtin, "Toward a Reworking," 293, uses the words "reified" and "objectified" synonymously with (*continued next page*)

properly understand the dialogic relationships of a spoken or written discourse because these dialogic relationships are metalinguistic in nature.²⁶⁶

Second, Bakhtin shows that metalinguistic analysis affirms how language arises from, exists within, and gives rise to community. In other words, Bakhtin's dialogic approach to language moved beyond isolating the *ownership* of language and speech discourse.²⁶⁷ Whereas linguistic approaches identify the speaker of a discourse as the exclusive owner of an utterance, Bakhtin points out that "Words belong to no one in and of themselves." As meaningful communication in the dialogic reality words "always belong to (at least) two people, the speaker and his or her listener."²⁶⁸ As an utterance embodied by someone and spoken for someone else, a discourse is always "interindividual," Bakhtin stated, belonging to both the speaker and the listener.²⁶⁹

"materialize." He writes, "Reified (materializing, objectified) images are profoundly inadequate for life and for discourse." In other words, Bakhtin argues against studying discourse as an object. Discourse is always spoken in a context by particular people for particular people in response and in anticipation of other discourses. Discourses create dialogic relationships. Discourse, therefore, can not be properly understood and responded to as an object removed from its contexts and dialogic relationships.

²⁶⁶ Traditional linguistic approaches, Bakhtin argues, neither "understand nor study," the normative dialogic relationships "that an utterance acquires in practice."

²⁶⁷ Traditional linguistic approaches fail to recognize the dialogic relationships that an utterance acquires with its speaker and with its receivers because, Bakhtin asserts, they also misunderstand the *ownership* of an utterance.

²⁶⁸ Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres." Bakhtin writes, "Words belong to nobody and in themselves they evaluate nobody. But they can serve any speaker and be used for the most varied and directly contradictory evaluations on the part of the speakers." Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 282. "The speaker strives to get a reading on his own word, and on his own conceptual horizon, that determines this word," Bakhtin acknowledges, but only "within the alien horizon of the understanding receiver. See also Morson and Emerson, *Creation of Prosaics*, 129. Morson and Emerson point out, "Words belong to their speakers (or writers) only in the least interesting way," - in only an abstract sense or "purely physiological sense."

²⁶⁹ Bakhtin, "The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis," in *Speech Genres and Other Lates Essays*, 121-22. "The author (speaker) has his own inalienable right to the word," Bakhtin writes, "but the listener also has his rights." Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 282. The speaker and the speaker's discourse enter into dialogic relationships with certain aspects of "the alien horizon of the listener" as the speaker constructs his or her discourse against the listener's background

Third, Bakhtin shows how metalinguistic analysis recognizes and describes the complex artistry of language both as utterance within a community and as utterance in dialogic relationship with other utterances spoken within a larger community.²⁷⁰ His definition of an utterance as a link in a chain of speech communication shows an utterance always existing in constant relationship to a speaker and to a receiver. In dialogue, words are embodied by people for expression, but only so that someone else can assume an *active responsive position* to that expression. Moreover, the speaker not only speaks for someone else to respond, but actually shapes his or her utterance specifically for another so that the discourse also stands in dialogic relationship to its receiver.

Grasping the complexities of dialogic discourse also depends on recognizing *how* discourses or utterances stand in dialogic relationship with each other. Bakhtin's study of how utterances stand in dialogic relationship to each other explains why he believed that traditional linguistics analysis was not enough to study and appreciate the complexities of dialogue. What matters when interpreting relationship of two utterances, Bakhtin writes, "is not the mere presence of language styles, social dialects, and so forth" as established by purely linguistic study, but rather the "dialogic angle at which these styles and dialects are juxtaposed and counterposed."²⁷¹ Metalinguistic analysis, for Bakhtin, studies the dialogic relationships that arise "between" and "toward" other utterances.²⁷²

²⁷⁰ Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," 93. Bakhtin's distinction between *sentence* and *utterance* explains why he argues that Saussure's linguistic approach and other traditional linguistic approaches alone were inadequate for understanding the true complexities and artistic nature of dialogic discourse. When a metalinguistic analysis is used to study the dialogic relationships of the utterance, Bakhtin writes it "proves to be a very complex and multiplanar phenomenon."

²⁷¹ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 182. In order study more than the abstract meaning of an utterance, one must study more than just the semiotic meaning and relationships of words within a discourse as traditional linguistic approaches suggest. Bakhtin writes, "This dialogic angle is precisely what cannot not be measured by purely linguistic criteria, because dialogic relationships, although belonging to the realm of the *word*, (continued next page)

Finally, because metalinguistic analysis reveals the complexity of communication and of people in communication with one another, Bakhtin shows how such analysis adds depth to our understanding of how people communicate and to our ability to enter into conversation with speech discourses. Bakhtin's distinction of *single-voiced discourses* and *double-voiced discourses*, and his categories of *double-voiced discourse* identify the dynamics of how people use already spoken words for their own communicative purposes. If we do not recognize the existence of double-voiced discourse as a metalinguistic phenomenon, but rather generalize it as just ordinary speech, Bakhtin concludes "then we will not grasp these phenomena in their essence: stylization will be taken for style, parody simply for a poor work of art."²⁷³

In the next chapter we will see how Bakhtin applied his dialogic concepts and metalinguistic analysis specifically to his reading of narrative discourses. Written narrative discourses, like speech discourses, can be permeated with dialogic relationships among the author, the characters, their discourses, and the reader.²⁷⁴ Written narrative discourses are also

do not belong to the realm of its purely linguistic study. Dialogic relationships (including the dialogic relationships of a speaker and his own discourse) are the subject of metalinguistics.

²⁷² Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 183.

²⁷³ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 185. While he acknowledges that double-voiced discourse styles have attracted the attention of both literary scholars and linguistic analysis as an "artistic-speech phenomena," Bakhtin points out that they "exceed the limits of linguistics" because they are metalinguistic in nature. "Linguistics does not recognize double-voiced discourse," Bakhtin writes, because double-voiced discourse "must become one of the chief objects of study for metalinguistics."

²⁷⁴ Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," 75. Written discourses, Bakhtin points out, especially "artistic genres, in spite of all the ways in which they differ from rejoinders in dialogue, are by nature the same kind of units of speech communication." Just as real life speech communication is dialogic because it is spoken as an expression for someone else, an author's written discourse, Bakhtin argues "like the rejoinder in dialogue, is oriented toward the response of the others." See also Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," 88. There is a natural dialogic relationship between author and reader because the narrative is an expression of the author for someone else – the reader. See also Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," 92–93. He explains how the reader's dialogic relationship with the author and characters is exhibited in written communication as the readers often "guess" and "sense" the author or characters' expressive intonations based on the context of the narrative. With regards to the dialogic relationship created by characters see Bakhtin, "Toward a Reworking," 293–94. "Literature," Bakhtin points out, "creates utterly specific images of people where *I* and *another* are combined in a special and unrepeatable way."

like real life dialogue because, in addition to the possibility of being permeated with dialogic relationships, there is also a dialogic potential for each of the relationships that is created among the author, the characters, their discourses, and the readers. Just as a speaker can strengthen his or her relationship to the person he or she is in dialogue with by choosing a *dialogic* or a *monologic* aim for his or her discourse, so also an author can strengthen or weaken the dialogic relationships that he or she creates within his or her narrative.

Bakhtin's dialogic theory informed his reading of the dialogues that take place in Dostoevsky's novels and his interpretation of Dostoevsky's textual characters. Bakhtin studies how authors strengthen or weaken their dialogic relationships *with* their readers and *with* their characters, as well as how authors strengthen or weaken the dialogic relationships *between* the characters and *between* reader and the characters by choosing to write in a *monologic* or a *dialogic* discourse style. We shall see how his dialogic conception and metalinguistic analysis of narrative discourses can deepen our reading experiences as we interpret textual characters.

CHAPTER TWO

A DIALOGIC APPROACH TO INTERPRETING TEXTUAL CHARACTERS

I. Novelistic Discourse and Dialogic Relationships

A. Introduction

Novelistic discourse is the term Bakhtin uses to describe the narrative discourse that is most dialogic and that creates the strongest and most complex dialogic relationships among author, characters, and the reader.²⁷⁵ He labels the dialogic discourse style found in narrative literature *novelistic* because the modern novel, for him, imitated the most life-like dialogue. The novel is able to imitate real life dialogue because it does not conform to a particular genre or plot structure.²⁷⁶ Its discourse is free and flexible, as open and evolving as the discourse of real life dialogue.²⁷⁷

Yet, Bakhtin does not mean to suggest that novelistic discourse was only found in the modern novel. In his *Epic and Novel*, Bakhtin traces the evolution of *novelistic discourse* in literature from ancient Socratic dialogues to the complex network of dialogues depicted in

²⁷⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, 50. Bakhtin writes, "We speak of a special novelistic discourse because it is only in the novel that discourse can reveal all its specific potential and achieve its true depth."

²⁷⁶ Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 262. "The novel," Bakhtin writes, "can be defined as a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized." See also Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," 3, 7. "The study of the novel as a genre is distinguished by peculiar difficulties," Bakhtin writes. "We know other genres, as genres, in their completed aspect, that is, as more or less fixed pre-existing forms into which one may then pour artistic experience." However, the novel does not conform to these "pre-existing forms," Bakhtin points out, but rather shows its discourse to be "free and flexible" highlighting many points of view that become "dialogized."

²⁷⁷ Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," 7–9. Novelistic discourses, Bakhtin writes, become "more free and flexible, their language renews itself by incorporating extraliterary heteroglossia." Thus, the novel does not conform to particular discourse structure as other literary genres do. Bakhtin criticizes literary theory, which works "confidently" and "precisely" with other "genres" because they have a "finished and already formed object, definite and clear." However, literary theory for him had yet to adequately address the discourse of the novel because it could not be reduced to a genre structure.

modern novels.²⁷⁸ *Novelistic discourse* is dialogic, he asserted, because it has a *polyphonic* quality, which creates a plurality of points of view in dialogue with each other.²⁷⁹

In other words, *novelistic discourse* shows itself to be dialogic primarily by the position that the author takes in telling the narrative. The novelistic author writes from a position that “affirms the independence, internal freedom, unfinalizability, and indeterminacy” of the various points of view within the narrative world.²⁸⁰ He or she does not allow his or her point of view to objectify and materialize the narrative world as a fixed and completed image for his or her reader, but rather allows the narrative world to remain open and evolving in order to create a plurality of voices in dialogue with each other.²⁸¹ Prioritizing dialogue over plot and imagery allows the novelistic author to create the most complex dialogic relationships among himself or herself and his or her characters and readers.

Thus, the reader can recognize that an author is writing with novelistic discourse because the author shows his or her desire to be in dialogic relationship with his or her *characters*. Authors that use novelistic discourse do not objectify or finalize their characters as fixed images of plot or personality traits in the minds of the readers, but rather allow their characters to

²⁷⁸ Bakhtin, “Toward a Reworking,” 291. Socratic dialogue, according to Bakhtin, which replaced tragic dialogue, was the first step in the history of the new genre of the novel.

²⁷⁹ Bakhtin, *Problems in Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 3. Bakhtin’s term, *polyphony*, explains how the author allows many voices to speak as their own point of view, free from the objectification of the author’s point of view. He wrote, “This type of artistic thinking found its expression in Dostoevsky’s novels, but its significance extends far beyond the limits of the novel alone.”

²⁸⁰ Bakhtin, *Problems in Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 63.

²⁸¹ Bakhtin, “Epic and Novel,” 7. Novelistic discourse, according to Bakhtin, “Epic and Novel,” 48, lives with a “certain semantic open-endedness, a living contact with unfinished, still evolving contemporary reality.” Characters are depicted as “evolving and developing,” he pointed out, and learning “from life.” Narratives written with monologic discourse, Bakhtin, “Epic and Novel,” 34, writes, show a character to be “an individual of the absolute past and of the distanced image. As such he is a fully finished and completed being.”

become *carriers of their own truth* expressing themselves in dialogue with other characters.²⁸²

The characters are free from the author's *monologic* discourse and consciousness to speak their own point of view *on the boundaries* of others.²⁸³

In addition to recognizing the strong dialogic relationships created among an author and his or her characters, a reader can also recognize that an author is using novelistic discourse by how an author creates dialogic relationships among the *discourses* spoken in the narrative world. Double-voiced discourse "inevitably arises," Bakhtin explains, when a plurality of view points is allowed to speak in dialogue with each other.²⁸⁴ Recognizing and studying the dialogic relationships created among the double-voiced discourses, for Bakhtin, offers "exceptionally great significance for an understanding of artistic prose."²⁸⁵ It allows the reader to understand and appreciate the complexities and artistic nature of how people use already spoken words in their own speech discourses for their own purposes.

Finally, the reader can recognize that an author is using novelistic discourse as the author shows his or her desire to be in dialogic relationship with the *readers*. Authors use their novelistic discourse to invite their readers to be more than observers of plot and imagery. "One must read not for the plot, but for the dialogues," Morson and Emerson point out, "and to read

²⁸² Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 47. Novelistic characters are often portrayed Bakhtin writes, as "a point of view, as an opinion on the world and on himself." Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," 36. Characters depicted through novelistic discourse become "their own rudimentary but inexhaustible human face."

²⁸³ Bakhtin, "Toward a Reworking," 287. "Not that which takes place within, but that which takes place on the *boundary* between one's own and someone else's consciousness," Bakhtin writes, is what is important for characters to reveal their own autonomous consciousness.

²⁸⁴ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 185. The "chief hero" of novelistic discourse, Bakhtin asserts is double-voiced discourse, which he pointed out, "inevitably arises under conditions of dialogic interaction."

²⁸⁵ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 199–200.

the dialogues is to participate in them.”²⁸⁶ Regardless of a narrative’s setting, or when it is written, novelistic discourse creates what Bakhtin calls a *contemporary reality* with the reader’s open and unfinalized world and experience, which allows the reader to be an *active* participant in an open-ended dialogue instead of just an observer of an objectified and finalized narrative world. This *contemporary reality* invites the reader into strong dialogic relationship with both author and characters.²⁸⁷

B. The Need for Metalinguistic Analysis when Interpreting the Novelistic Discourse and Dialogic Relationships

Reading for the dialogues, according to Bakhtin, means interpreting the dialogic essence of novelistic discourse and novelistic characters in the same way a person interprets speech discourses and the people who speak them in real life. Since novelistic discourse is dialogic discourse, it requires “utterly special methods of discovery,” he argued, that are capable of recognizing and studying the dialogic relationships created among the author, characters, and readers.²⁸⁸ Therefore, literary scholarship, according to him, needed to “reconsider” the way it studied the dialogic discourse found in narrative literature.²⁸⁹

Bakhtin’s dialogic approach, first of all, argues that more was need than just traditional linguistics when interpreting novelistic discourse and novelistic characters. Approaches based on

²⁸⁶ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 249.

²⁸⁷ Bakhtin, “Epic and Novel,” 31–32, writes that the narrative world acquires a relationship “in one form or another, to one degree or another to the ongoing event of current life in which we, the author and readers, are intimately participating.” There is a “zone of maximally close contact between the represented object contemporary reality in all its inconclusiveness—and consequently a similarly close contact between the object and the future.”

²⁸⁸ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 48.

²⁸⁹ Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” 267, writes, “Stylistics and the philosophy of discourse indeed confront a dilemma: either to acknowledge the novel (and consequently all artistic prose tending in that direction) as unartistic or quasi-artistic genre, or to radically reconsider the conception that conception of poetic discourse in which traditional stylistics is grounded and which determines its categories.”

traditional linguistic approaches are “rich in valuable observations,” he acknowledges, but they alone are not prepared to study the distinctively dialogic features of novelistic discourse.

Traditional linguistic approaches cannot “accommodate the artistic prose of novelistic discourse” because instead of reading for the dialogues, they read for plot or other components of a narrative that are presupposed to reduce to neat and fixed structures. Many formalist and structuralist approaches, for example, reduce all narratives to neat structures and all textual characters to some type of fixed structural component pertaining to the plot or imagery of the narrative.²⁹⁰ In so doing, they do not study the dialogic relationships that influence the way characters are portrayed, nor do they recognized the dialogue that readers are called to participate in with the author and characters as they as they read novelistic discourse.²⁹¹

All narratives do not reduce to neat structures, however, and all characters do not reduce to fixed images. Dostoevsky’s novels, for example, imitated “open-ended dialogue with an evolving multi-voiced meaning.”²⁹² Understanding the artistic design of his narratives was not about reducing them to some matter of “plot” or to some other “monologic idea,” Bakhtin

²⁹⁰ Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” 266, writes that traditional stylistics reduces characters to categories of “image” and symbol.” Vladimir Propp, for example, reduced all textual characters to plot functions. This may be plausible when interpreting characters depicted through an author’s monologic discourse created to fit the structure of a specific genre structure, such as Russian folk tails, but such an approach misunderstands the truly artistic and dialogic qualities inherent to novelistic discourse.

²⁹¹ While Bakhtin acknowledges formalist and structuralist approaches as plausible for interpreting characters portrayed through an author’s *monologic* discourse, he disagreed with applying their approaches to the interpretation of characters depicted through novelistic discourse. Bakhtin, “From the Prehistory of the Novel,” 42–43 argues, “And all the while discourse in the novel has been living a life that is distinctly its own a life that is impossible to understand from the point of view of stylistic categories formed on the basis of poetic genres in the narrow sense of the term.”

²⁹² Bakhtin, “Toward a Reworking,” 298, writes, “Dostoevsky uncovered the dialogic nature of societal life, of the life of a human being. Not ready-made existence, whose meaning the writer must uncover, but open-ended dialogue with an evolving multi-voiced meaning.”

writes.²⁹³ Rather, Dostoevsky sought the “integral voice,” so that fate and plot only become the “means for expressing voices.”²⁹⁴ The true art of Dostoevsky’s characterization can only be appreciated, Bakhtin argues, by recognizing how his characters imitate the dialogic reality made through their speech discourses, and then by studying the dialogic relationships that exist as his characters are allowed to be carriers of their own truth on the boundary of others.²⁹⁵

Furthermore, although Bakhtin’s approach advocates a realistic approach to interpreting novelistic character, his dialogic approach is much different from how many realist approaches interpret textual characters.²⁹⁶ Many realist approaches, such as the one proposed by Seymour Chatman, are based on psychological assumptions concerning how people interpret real people. For Chatman, the reader interprets what a textual character is “like” in a realistic way by building

²⁹³ Bakhtin, “Toward a Reworking,” 291, argues that Dostoevsky, more than anyone else revealed the complex and artistic possibilities of the dialogic discourse. Dostoevsky’s influence has still far from reached its culmination. The most essential and far-reaching aspects of his artistic vision, the revolution he brought about in the genre of the novel and in the art of literary art generally have yet to be fully assimilated and realized,” Bakhtin writes.

²⁹⁴ Bakhtin, “Toward a Reworking,” 296, writes, “Dostoevsky begins not with the idea, but with idea-heroes of a dialogue. He seeks the integral voice, and fate and event (the fates and events of the plot) become means for expressing voices.”

²⁹⁵ Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” 266, writes that the stylistics advocated by many narrative-critical approaches are “too narrow and cramped to recognize and appreciate the artistic and dialogic natures of novelistic discourse. Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 16, 19, label Bakhtin’s dialogic proposal for studying novelistic literature a “prosaic of prose.” They write, “In offering a prosaics . . . Bakhtin sought not to *supplement* traditional poetics with a ‘poetics of prose’ but to change our approach to literary genres, both poetic and prosaic . . . As a result, the entire tradition of poetics, from Aristotle to the Russian Formalists, must be thoroughly reconceived.” They continue, “For Bakhtin, the Formalists embodied the philosophical conception of poetics in its most extreme form, and could therefore serve as a convenient stand-in for the tradition as a whole.” Morson and Emerson add, “In advancing these objections, Bakhtin . . . had in mind the great traditions of the Formalist plot studies as developed by Shklovsky, Boris Tomashevsky, Boris Eichenbaum, and Vladimir Propp.”

²⁹⁶ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 60, writes that Dostoevsky “considers himself a realist, but not a subjective romantic trapped in the world of his own consciousness. He solves his *new* task, ‘portraying all the depths of the human soul’, with ‘utter realism,’ that is, he sees these depths *outside* himself, in the souls of *others*.” He further pointed out, “Dostoevsky believes that this *new* task cannot be performed by realism in the usual sense, that is, by what is in our terminology *monologic* realism; what is needed here is a special approach to ‘man in man,’ that is, a ‘realism in the higher sense.” Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 19, conclude that the approaches based on traditional stylistics of “our day” in which Bakhtin would contend would include those of Seymour Chatman, Gerard Genette, and Tzvetan Todorov.

a *paradigm of traits* for a character. This process, for him, reduces to an abstract formula, $C = T(n)$ (Character = traits).²⁹⁷ While Chatman does not reduce textual characters to mere plot functions or textual images, his approach encourages the reader to still reduce characters to objectified and finalized carriers of traits, or fixed images in the reader's mind.²⁹⁸

When formulas, such as the one Chatman proposes, are applied to interpret novelistic characters, the dialogic nature of what such characters are "like," Bakhtin argues, is misunderstood. Just as interpreting a real person as a fixed image only represents a partial abstraction of what that person is really "like," so interpreting a novelistic character in such a way only represents a partial abstraction of what that character is "like."²⁹⁹ Interpreting a novelistic character as a finalized and fixed image, as a "carrier of traits," he points out, denies that character's existence as a *fully valid voice*, a *carrier of his or her own truth*. Building a paradigm of traits for a novelistic character also fails to acknowledge how the author has allowed his or her characters to exist *on the boundary*, in dialogic relationship *toward others*.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁷ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 130, explains that "The trait paradigm is marked T(n) to show its open-endedness, to allow for allow for unrecognized traits that may suggest themselves in later readings. While he acknowledges the possible open-endedness of a character's personality, his methodology still leads the reader to objectify and materialize textual characters as fixed images in their mind.

²⁹⁸ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 120–31 asserts that readers interpret what textual characters are "like" by building a "paradigm of traits" for each character. Chatman defines a "trait" as "the narrative adjective tied to the narrative copula." Bakhtin, quoted in Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 125, then writes, "In 'Eveline,' for example, no such word as "timid" or "paralyzed" appears. But clearly we must infer these traits to understand the narrative."

²⁹⁹ Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity," 4–5, writes, "And even in the case where we give a complete definition of a human being as a whole, that is, where we define him as kind, as vicious, or as a good person, or as an egoist, etc.—such definitions express the practical position we assume in relation to him in our lived life: they not so much define him as propose a prognosis of what we can and what we cannot expect from him . . . least of all are we ourselves able or competent to perceive in ourselves the given whole of our own personality."

³⁰⁰ Bakhtin, "Toward a Reworking," 294, writes, "Thus complete materialization of the image of a person, as long as it remains an image, is impossible," and if a person does give an "objective sociological analysis of this image" then the image of the person is "transformed into a concept," and we then "place it outside the realm of *I-thou* relationship."

For Bakhtin, the dialogic reader does not apply formulas that objectify and materialize characters as fixed images when interpreting novelistic characters.³⁰¹ Interpreting textual characters portrayed through novelistic discourse is “not an analysis of consciousness in the form of a sole and single *I*,” he argued, “but precisely an analysis of the interactions of many consciousness.”³⁰² The goal of the dialogic reader is to recognize and interpret how the characters are conscious of themselves, their world, and others, but also how other characters are conscious of them. In other words, dialogic readers interpret novelistic characters as unfixed *carriers of their own truth* existing *on the boundary* of and in *I-through* relationship to other characters.

Thus, the significance of the narrative work, the images of the narrative text, and the personalities of the textual characters can not always be reduced to neat formulas and structures pertaining to plot, themes, and personality traits.³⁰³ The reader can only truly appreciate the complex and artistic nature of novelistic discourse and of novelistic characters by examining the dialogic relationships that are created in discourse among the author, the characters, their discourses, and the reader.³⁰⁴ The same metalinguistic analysis necessary for studying the

³⁰¹ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 59, writes, “A man never coincides with himself. One cannot apply to him the formula of identity $A=A$. . . The genuine life of the personality is made available only through dialogic penetration of that personality, during which it freely and reciprocally reveals itself.” Even Chatman acknowledges that “totality” in trait construction is not achievable. However, his methodology, which focuses on “who a character is,” leads one to believe it is. Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 121.

³⁰² Bakhtin, “Toward a Reworking,” 287.

³⁰³ Bakhtin, “Epic and Novel,” 10, argues, “The hero of a novel should not be ‘heroic’ in either the epic or tragic sense of the word,” but “he should combine in himself negative as well as positive features, low as well as lofty, ridiculous as well as serious.”

³⁰⁴ Bakhtin, *From the Prehistory of the Novel*, 42. See Bakhtin’s discussion on what he viewed as five different stylistic approaches from the most basic poetic approach which analyzes “methods of representations,” such as how metaphors are studied under rhetorical analysis. While all five approaches are unique to each other, Bakhtin’s critique against them is that none of them studied the dialogic nature of novelistic discourse – its dialogic relationships and so forth. The basic stylistics for studying the novel, Bakhtin, *From the Prehistory of the Novel*, 50, argues, pertain exclusively to the discourse styles—“the transfers and switchings of languages and voices; their dialogic relationships.”

dialogic relationships of real life speech communication, Bakhtin argues, is necessary for studying the dialogic relationships that exist in novelistic literature. For him, only metalinguistic analysis was the foundation of interpreting narratives and their characters.

II. Reading for Dialogue: A Metalinguistic Analysis of Dialogic Relationships

A. Honoring Readers and Authors as Participants in Dialogue

i. The Reader as an Active Participant in Dialogue. When reading for the dialogues of novelistic discourse, the reader is invited to become an active participant in dialogue with the author and the characters.³⁰⁵ In order to be a participant in the dialogues, the reader must recognize that he or she is a *carrier of truth* and a *fully valid voice on the boundary* of the author and the characters. Each reader brings his or her own unique life experience and presuppositions, or *outsidedness*, concerning others and the world to every dialogue, even to the dialogues that take place when reading narrative texts. Readers are male or female, young or old, rich or poor, educated or uneducated, married or single, religious or not religious, experienced or not experienced, living in this time period or that one, in this place or that place.³⁰⁶

Feminist readers, for example, exhibit how a reader's gender and presuppositions concerning gender can influence how he or she understands and responds to a narrative discourse. Bakhtin's dialogic view of a "multiplicity of voices" in dialogue with each other, Barbara Green posits, proves the feminist point of view to be a valuable outsidedness in dialogue

³⁰⁵ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 249. Instead of analyzing characters, plots, and the circumstances of a narrative in terms of stylistic categories, novelistic discourse Morson and Emerson write, turns readers into "dialogic partners of the characters and the author." See also Bakhtin, *Problems in Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 18. Dostoevsky invites his reader to become a "participant" in his dialogues, Bakhtin writes. "Not a single element of the work is structured from the point of view of a non-participating 'third person.'" See also p.237. He explained that it is impossible for Dostoevsky's characters or readers to be mere "eyewitnesses." They are called to be active participants in his dialogic world.

³⁰⁶ See Humphries, *The Character of God in the Book of Genesis*, 19.

with narrative discourses. In Bakhtin's dialogic world, no one voice, she writes, is "monologically correct or in control."³⁰⁷ The feminist voice, she argues, is just as valid and valuable as any other voice in dialogue with the narrative discourse.

A reader's outsideness influences the way he or she participates in dialogue when reading a narrative, first of all, because a person's outsideness contributes to his or her basic assumptions concerning his or her world and concerning how people communicate with language. As Bakhtin points out, people learn how to use language for speech communication from the various communities or cultures that they live within.³⁰⁸ Thus, a reader's outsideness gained from his or her speaking experience contributes to the possible *shared* assumptions about the world and about how language works, and these shared assumptions then enable possible meaningful communication to take place among the reader, the author, and the characters.

Second, a person's outsideness influences the way he or she participates in the dialogues of novelistic discourse because his or her outsideness shapes his or her point of view of the world and of other people. This subjective component of the reader's outsideness allows the reader to do more than merely understand or duplicate the author or character's speech expression. It allows the reader to enter into dialogue with the outsideness and the point of views of the author and characters by *testing* and then *actively responding* to the author, the

³⁰⁷ Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship*, 58. See also Dale M. Bauer and Susan Jaret McKinstry, introduction to *Feminism, Bakhtin and the Dialogic*, edited by Dale M. Bauer and Susan Jaret McKinstry (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1991), 2, 6. Bauer and McKinstry agree with Green's argument that Bakhtin's theory of *dialogism* welcomes feminist approaches because it recognizes "competing voices without making any single voice normative."

³⁰⁸ Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," 78, writes that we learn to speak with speech genres and use our native language because we hear other people speak and then reproduce other people's speech in live communication with others.

characters, and their dialogues in a narrative.³⁰⁹ Bakhtin's defense of a reader's outsidedness working toward an active and tested response to the speech expressions of the author and characters of a narrative acknowledges the power of dialogue in the reading event. The reader, according to him, does not need to deaden his or her own voice or point of view because honoring one's own voice and point of view is what enables the reader to engage in dialogue – a dialogue that is created anew with each new reader through his or her own outsidedness.

A reader who does not like foul language and cussing, for example, would most likely respond to a character that speaks in such a way differently from another reader who thinks such language is amusing or funny. One reader may respond to the author or a character's discourse with agreement. Another reader may respond to the same discourse with disagreement. Still another reader may respond with a sideward glance or polemical view of that discourse.

Third, a reader's outsidedness impacts the way a reader may *re-accentuate* a narrative discourse, which describes more than just responding to a discourse. *Re-accentuating* a literary discourse, for Bakhtin, describes the process by which people from different cultural backgrounds or people living in different time periods from the culture or time of a written discourse will read different potential meanings into the language and images of the narrative text.³¹⁰ Since novelistic discourse allows its language and images to remain more open and

³⁰⁹ As chapter one points out, perceiving and actively responding to a person and his or her discourse is what Bakhtin calls *creatively understanding*.

³¹⁰ According to Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 419, novelistic discourse, in particular, is "living" discourse, and under the "changed conditions" of the outsidedness of its many different readers, there emits "bright new rays, burning away the reifying crust that had grown up around it." Thus, he acknowledged the "great and seminal importance" of how the words and images of literary texts are *re-accentuated* by readers of different cultures and times. He writes, "Under changed conditions" a meaning "may emit bright new rays, burning away the reifying crust that had grown up around it . . ."

evolving re-accentuation naturally takes place when read by different readers with different outsidenesses.³¹¹

Shakespeare has “grown” and continues to “grow,” Bakhtin writes, because different readers have re-accentuated his narrative discourses from their own outsideness. New images have been found in his work that he and his contemporaries could not “perceive and evaluate in the context of the culture of their epoch.”³¹² A young interracial American couple living during the civil rights movement, for example, who had been prohibited by their families from dating each other because of their different skin color, could have *re-accentuated* Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* with an understanding of a racial component to a forbidden romance that perhaps Shakespeare had never intended.³¹³

Some interpretive approaches have argued that the reader should set aside his or her outsideness with the goal of “entering into” a foreign perspective to attain an objective understanding.³¹⁴ As Bakhtin rejects this idea for understanding real life dialogue, he also rejected the idea that the reader set aside his or her outsideness when interpreting a written

³¹¹ Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” 421, writes, “New images in literature are very often created through a re-accentuating of old images, by translating them from one accentual register to another (from a comic plane to the tragic, for instance, or the other way around). Bakhtin, “Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences,” in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, 169–70, writes, “There is neither a first nor last word, and there are no limits to the dialogic context (it extends into the boundless past and the boundless future.”

³¹² Bakhtin, “Response to a Question,” 5–6, writes, “Genres (of literature and speech) throughout the centuries of their life accumulate forms of seeing and interpreting particular aspects of the world. For the writer-craftsman the genre serves as an external template, but the great artist awakens the semantic possibilities that lie within it. Shakespeare took advantage of and included in his work immense treasures of potential meaning that could not be fully revealed or recognized in his epoch.”

³¹³ In fact, *West Side Story* is such a re-accentuation of the *Romeo and Juliet* story that includes a racial component.

³¹⁴ Such is the case for many structuralist and formalist approaches. Bakhtin, “Response to a Question,” 7, writes, “There exists a very strong, but one-sided and thus untrustworthy, idea that in order better to understand a foreign culture, one must enter into it, forgetting one’s own, and view the world (entirely) through the eyes of this foreign culture.” See also Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 55.

narrative discourse. “In order to understand,” Bakhtin writes, “it is immensely important for the person who understands to be located outside the object of his or her creative understanding.”³¹⁵

A reader should not “renounce” or “forget” his or her *outsidedness* because, according to him, a person’s *outsidedness* allows true dialogue to take place.

Bakhtin’s concept of *outsidedness* explains how readers participate in an active and subjective way when interpreting the consciousnesses of the author and of the characters through novelistic discourse. A person’s *outsidedness*, which includes his or her basic assumptions about the world and language, enables the reader to understand and interpret the intent of the author and characters’ discourses. Moreover, it is the reader’s *outsidedness* that enables readers to actively respond to or even re-accentuate their discourses for their own time and culture.³¹⁶ The reader’s *outsidedness* creates the possibility for true dialogue to take place between himself or herself and the author, and between himself or herself and the characters.³¹⁷

ii. The Author as an Active Participant in Dialogue. In addition to viewing the reader as an active participant in dialogue, Bakhtin’s dialogic approach also views the author as an active participant in this dialogue. Many reader-response approaches, however, have misappropriated and misrepresented his view of the activity of the author in creating a narrative for dialogue with the reader. Bakhtin is often misunderstood as a “relativist,” or as someone who did not honor the

³¹⁵Bakhtin, “Response to a Question,” 7.

³¹⁶ Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 69, points out that dialogic discourse, whether spoken in real life dialogue or written in novelistic discourse engages the listener or reader in a way that expects not a passive understanding that only “duplicates” the author’s idea, but rather an active response, such as “agreement, sympathy, objection, execution, and so forth.”

³¹⁷ As pointed out in the previous chapter, true dialogue for Bakhtin, “Response to a Question,” 7, is not about “objectively understanding” another person’s point of view. Such “understanding” is mere “duplication.” Instead, the goal of a person who intends to engage another person in true dialogue is to *creatively understand* and *actively respond* to the other person’s point of view. Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 56, write, “In literary studies, Bakhtin insists, outsidedness is equally valuable” as it is to creatively understanding real life speech communication.

intended meaning of the author's discourse, Morson and Emerson observe. While Bakhtin does acknowledge the importance of the reader's outsideness in interpreting the author and characters' discourses, he did not promote complete subjectivity or relativism in interpreting narrative texts.³¹⁸ *Creative understanding* and true dialogue "cannot take place," if the reader adopts a position of relativism.³¹⁹ Relativism for Bakhtin, Morson and Emerson write, is "itself a form of monologization" and ends true dialogue because it does not consider and honor another person's point of view.³²⁰

Bakhtin's assertions concerning the role of the reader have also been misappropriated by many deconstructionist approaches, Morson and Emerson point out. Deconstructionists have specifically celebrated Bakhtin's theory of *carnival*, Morson and Emerson write, which usually involves "mockery of all serious, 'closed' attitudes about the world," and which also speaks of a "discrowning" of any given structure or intended meaning."³²¹ Thus, Bakhtin is celebrated, they write, as an "antinomian" rejoicing in "joyful deconstruction." He is claimed as one who denied authorship because the reader, after all, is the author of another's text.³²²

³¹⁸ Morson and Emerson, *A Creation of a Prosaics*, 59, write, "Bakhtin, we have observed, is often misunderstood as a relativist."

³¹⁹ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 55, write that total relativism assumes "(as some modern theorists teach) that one can only learn what one knows in advance and that one necessarily turns everything into a mirror of one's self."

³²⁰ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 59, write that relativism leaves "us with an infinity of monologizations," and "in a world where responsibility in any meaningful sense is absent." See also page 285 where they write, "If we could get out of texts only what we bring to them" then "literature could never teach us anything of value."

³²¹ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 67. Thus, it is not surprising that Bakhtin is treated as a "philosophic anarchist," compared to and confused with the more contemporary philosophy of Michael Bakunin, who is famous for the aphorism: "the passion to destroy is a creative passion."

³²² *Ibid.* Morson and Emerson write, "Bakhtin, who never gave up his commitment to ethical responsibility, is presented as playful and anarchically irresponsible."

In addition to valuing Bakhtin's concept of carnival, Barbara Green points to a second reason that feminist deconstructionists value Bakhtin's work.³²³ Bakhtin's dialogic approach welcomes her feminist point of view, she asserts, because his concept of dialogue insists that a multiplicity of voices "from a variety of positions inevitably shape all linguistic reality."³²⁴ While she concedes that Bakhtin had no interest in gender and also that he never even mentioned gender as particular category of thought, she concludes that the feminist voice is a valued voice in the dialogue of any literary discourse.

Morson and Emerson have pointed out problems with the way deconstructionists have appropriated Bakhtin's work for their interpretive approaches.³²⁵ First of all, when taking all of Bakhtin's work into consideration, and especially the essays he wrote at the end of his writing career, it is evident that Bakhtin shows more concern about the responsibility readers have toward the authorial intent of a discourse, Morson and Emerson argue, than toward exploring carnivalistic concepts such as "discrowning" and "inverting" narrative images and structures.³²⁶ If anything, Bakhtin was an advocate for the importance of the reader interpreting and honoring

³²³ Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship*, 58, acknowledges the "highly complex" nature of Bakhtin's concept of "carnavalesque," and thus chooses to "leave it behind" in favor of appropriating other Bakhtinian concepts for her feminist readings.

³²⁴ Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship*, 58, writes, "He is virtually mute on the subject of gendered language. Nor does he seem to have been even incipiently feminist in his personal life." Therefore, "it seems ludicrous to some," she acknowledges, "that his writings be employed by feminists and outrageous to others that a(nother) male authority be used in feminist criticism."

³²⁵ While they admit that there are elements of "antinomianism, theoretical anarchism" within his concept of *carnival*, Bakhtin "insulated" himself, Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 67, argue, from the deconstructionist philosophies of deferring and destroying authorial meaning.

³²⁶ In his late writing, Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," 77, clearly advocates the interpretation of the "authorial intent" and "speech will" of the author of a discourse. Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 43, write, "Judged by the entirety of his work, Bakhtin is, if anything, an apostle of constraints. For without constraints of the right sort, he believed, neither freedom nor creativity, neither unfinalizability nor responsibility can be real."

the speech will or authorial intent of a discourse.³²⁷ Therefore, viewing Bakhtin's work as a support for deconstructive approaches obscures his work as a whole, Morson and Emerson argue, not to mention the concepts about which he wrote more frequently and consistently.³²⁸

Second, Green may be correct in asserting that Bakhtin would welcome a feminist response or re-accentuation of a text as one of a plurality of voices or point of views if she was simply defending the outsidedness that one brings to the dialogue of a narrative text.³²⁹ However, Green's defense of appropriating Bakhtin within her feminist approach is more than a defense of her outsidedness in dialogue with another point of view. Feminist approaches advocate an entire philosophical system that presupposes an understanding of how every author of certain demographics views the world and how such authors are constrained and inhibited by their ideological world view. Bakhtin was "suspicious" of such systems, Morson and Emerson point

³²⁷ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 67, write, "Generally speaking, Bakhtin was much less concerned with millenarian fantasies and holy foolishness than with constraints and responsibilities of everyday living." Morson and Emerson, *Creation of Prosaics*, 220, also write, "Bakhtin does not mean to suggest that mere hostility to authority is a mark of maturity," Morson and Emerson write. Finally Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship*, 24, writes that there is nothing in Bakhtin's writings "that seems compatible with nihilism, with endless deferral of meaning, or with extreme relativism." In fact, Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship*, 62, later reminds her readers that "Bakhtin did not theorize so much about the reader as about the author."

³²⁸ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 443, point out that Bakhtin's concept of *carnival* also contains an idea that "all important value resides in openness and incompleteness." However, they also write, "This carnival mode is the canonical base for a number of very peculiar appropriations of Bakhtin, from Marxist to deconstructionist, and in our view it has tended to obscure the larger and more consistent shape of his thought." Also Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 67, observe that the concept of *carnival*, while offering insights to *Rabelais* and other of Dostoevsky's works "ultimately proved a dead end" for Bakhtin. It is, according to Morson and Emerson, one of his weaker most and more incomplete formulations of thought. In *Response to a Question*, 2, Bakhtin writes against the deconstructive Marxist readings of his day that presupposed literary texts must be deconstructed of socioeconomic power plays. He argued that while literature can not be separated from culture, it also "can not be correlated with socioeconomic factors, as if it were, behind culture's back."

³²⁹ In other words, Bakhtin would welcome Green's feminist voice if she advocated a reading that sought to interpret the speech will of the author, and then offered her feminist sideward glance or polemic view in response to the author's point of view.

out, that were presented as the final truth of how and why particular authors write their discourses.³³⁰

Bakhtin rejects the Marxist deconstructionist approaches of his day, not because they were concerned about socio-economic factors, but because they presented their approach as a system – a “form of theoretism.”³³¹ Marxist approaches assumed that every author of a certain socio-economic class was constrained by a need to exert power over other lower socio-economic classes. Such authors, they presupposed, must be deconstructed of their power interested ideologies. While Bakhtin acknowledges that literature must not be studied in a way that separates it from the rest of culture and ideology, literature must not *always* be correlated “with socioeconomic factors” either, he wrote, as if they were always “behind culture’s back.”³³² Power and ideology are a part of culture and they do play a role in the way literature is written, but to study literature as if it is only and always a result of a power interest or influence is, according to Bakhtin, a “crude” perspective of literature, which often ignores the speech will or intent of the author.³³³

Feminist deconstructive approaches, like Marxist deconstructive approaches, seek to unmask the assumed power driven ideology of certain authors. For feminists, it is the socio-

³³⁰ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of Prosaics*, 175. This is also why he was “suspicious” of formalism and structuralism – they presented themselves as “systems” of theory.

³³¹ Bakhtin, “Response to a Question,” 2–3, rejects the Marxist way of examining literature because it presented itself as a system of understanding all literature by deconstructing the ideology of the author instead of interpreting the ideology of the author. By not taking into account the whole cultural epoch in which a piece of literature is written, and by merely focusing on one aspect such as power or ideology, lead to what Bakhtin calls a “superficial struggle of literary schools.” Such approaches, he claimed, do not make it possible to penetrate into the depths of great works,” but rather turn reading and interpreting literature into “a trivial instead of a serious pursuit.”

³³² Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 34. Bakhtin, “Response to a Question,” 2, was speaking against the Marxist presuppositions of his day that had influenced the study of literature. One could plausibly assume that Bakhtin would say the same about other deconstructive approaches that presuppose other power plays, such as the feminist approaches that correlate gender factors “as if it were, behind culture’s back.”

gender power factors that they assume are always “behind culture’s back.” The plurality of voices, Green writes, “decenters the patriarchal control from any one person or group, avoids the sovereign and authoritative.”³³⁴ It is fair to assume, then, that Bakhtin would have issues with the way such contemporary Feminist approaches have interpreted literature because they present their approach as a system of “theoretism.”³³⁵ In the same way that a character’s consciousness and discourse in novelistic discourse can not “be exhausted by the usual functions of characterization and plot development” as the theories of formalism and structuralism presuppose, so also a character’s discourse and consciousness do not *only* “serve as a vehicle for the author’s own ideological position,” Bakhtin asserts, as deconstructionists presuppose.³³⁶

Thus, although he pointed to the importance of creatively understanding and re-accentuating narrative discourses, Bakhtin also acknowledges that there are legitimate and productive ways for the reader to do so. While the reader should not renounce his or her *outsidedness*, Bakhtin points to the *responsibility* that the reader has to honor the expressive will and intent of the author of a discourse.³³⁷ There is “no crude violation of the author’s will” when

³³³ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 34.

³³⁴ Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship*, 58.

³³⁵ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 35. Bakhtin would likely consider Feminist approaches to be guilty of oversimplifying the process of interpretation, Morson and Emerson point out, by asserting that Feminists imagine that they have understood a literary work by situating it among their own literary and philosophical presuppositions. Morson and Emerson point out that Marxist and deconstructionists “imagine that they have understood a work’s context when they have situated it among the literary polemics and schools of its time.” Also Morson and Emerson, 233, point out, “If, as some have recently argued, all disputes ultimately reduce to power interest, then ‘authentic dialogue’ about values and meaning is pointless.”

³³⁶ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 7.

³³⁷ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 41, point out, “For Bakhtin, creativity and responsibility were inseparable both part of the ‘task’ and the work of daily life.” Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 220, also comment, “To take on responsibility with respect to a discourse, or to any kind of authority, it is necessary not to dislike it, but to enter into dialogue with it—that is, to *test, assimilate, and reaccentuate* it.” Barbara Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship*, 24, indicates that fundamental for Bakhtin is “the irreducible responsibility of the individual, both aesthetically and ethically.”

the reader becomes a *responsible* dialogue partner with his or her own outsideness.³³⁸

“Scholarly analysis,” for Bakhtin, can only take place in light of the author’s expressed speech will.³³⁹

In other words, Shakespeare’s works have not “grown” in their re-accentuations because readers have distorted or destroyed his authorial intent, or because they have unmasked his particular ideologies. They have grown, according to Bakhtin, because modern readers have been able to understand Shakespeare’s intended expression constrained by his own outsideness and the cultural epoch in which he lived, and then creatively understand and re-accentuate his expression in a way that honors his authorial intentions from their own outsidenesses.³⁴⁰

The field of modern psychology, for instance, has grown since Shakespeare’s day. A reader may re-accentuate Hamlet’s psychological and emotional state in light of modern psychological insights. However, doing so does not change or destroy Shakespeare’s Hamlet, nor does it deconstruct Shakespeare’s assumed power interest ideologies. Such a re-accentuation simply allows the modern reader to understand Shakespeare’s Hamlet in light of a modern outsideness.

³³⁸ Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” 420–22, writes about the distortions and oversimplifications of re-accentuating narrative images like textual characters. “Especially dangerous is any vulgarizing that oversimplifies re-accentuation (which is cruder in all respects than that of the author and his time) and that turns a two-voiced image into one that is flat, single voiced-into a stilted heroic image, a Sentimental and pathos-charged one, or (at the other extreme) into a primitively comic one.”³³⁸ Bakhtin, “Toward a Reworking,” 298, notes that the author “is a participant in the dialogue,” and fulfills the complex function of holding “the reigns between the *ideal dialogue* of the work and the actual dialogue of reality.”

³³⁹ Bakhtin, “Response to a Question,” 5, writes, “It certainly does not follow from what we have said that the writer’s own epoch can somehow be ignored.” Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” 75, in chapter one, explains how the reader works at understanding the writer’s speech will.

³⁴⁰ Bakhtin, “Response to a Question,” 5, asks, for example, “But do we then attribute to Shakespeare’s works something that was not there, do we modernize and distort them?” Bakhtin concedes that an image “may be subjected to a re-accentuation that radically distorts it,” and that such “has been the fate of many novels from previous eras,” but then implied that distortion of the author’s intended meaning is not the goal of re-accentuation. Also Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” 420, writes concerning re-accentuations of a discourse or an image of a narrative, “It can even be said that this process takes place within the image itself, i.e., not only in the changed conditions of perception. Such conditions merely actualize in an image a potential already available to it (it is true
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Bakhtin's view of the reader participating in the dialogues as a carrier of his or her own truth is, thus, different from many post-structuralist reader response approaches that are not interested in honoring the authorial intent. Meaningful communication always takes place between two people even when reading literature. The reader as a participant in the dialogue, has the ability and *responsibility* just as the author does, to strengthen or weaken the dialogic relationships created among the narrative discourse. If the reader takes a relativistic or de(con)structive attitude toward the author or character's speech will and intent of their words, the reader will inevitably weaken and even destroy the intended dialogic relationship between him or her and the author or characters.³⁴¹

The goal for the dialogic reader is to interpret and honor the intent of the author's and characters' speech discourses and by doing so, gain an understanding of how they are conscious of their world, of each other, and of themselves. The dialogic reader *then* enters into dialogue with their point of views from his or her own outsideness to *creatively understand* the intent of their expressions with agreement, disagreement, or even perhaps with a polemical blow. The dialogic reader may also re-accentuate the intent of an author or character's speech expression for his or her own time and culture. Yet, if the reader intends to maintain a dialogic relationship with the author or character and their discourses, he or she will do so in a way that does not make relative, nor destroy the original intent of their discourses.

that while these conditions strengthen some possibilities, they weaken others)."

³⁴¹ For instance, Tribble, "Exegesis for Storytellers and Other Strangers," 3, acknowledges that the reader can discern the authorial intent. She says as readers interpret Elijah as "good" and Jezebel as "evil" authorial-intentionality and reader-response converge for "interpretive compatibility." Her reading, however, is more about "spicing theological discussion" than interpreting the authorial intent. Morson and Emerson, *Creation of Prosaics*, 220, note that Bakhtin also does not "mean to condemn agreement with authority as a mark of immaturity or irresponsibility." Rather, "to agree with a discourse is already to have tested it, deprived it of unconditional allegiance, and integrated it into one's own framework." Agreement, Bakhtin acknowledges is just as much a dialogic response to an utterance as disagreement.

B. The Art of Reading for Dialogue

ii. In Dialogue with Monologic Discourse: 1. Author-Reader Relationship. The author, Bakhtin writes, fulfills the complex function of holding “the reigns between the *ideal dialogue* of the work and the actual dialogue of reality.”³⁴² Therefore, “Reading for the dialogues,” begins by interpreting the dialogic aim of the author’s discourse. The author’s dialogic task or aim is revealed to the reader by the discourse style that he or she chooses for the narrative.

When reading for the dialogues of an author’s *monologic discourse*, the reader will recognize that the dialogic relationship between him or her and the author is weak and limited. Authors that write in monologic discourse write in a way that shows they do not expect or desire their readers to question or test their authorial semantic authority, but rather expect their readers to respond to their monologic discourse by simply accepting and agreeing with their objectified and materialized narrative world.³⁴³ The monologic author uses his or her *authorial surplus* and perspective to objectify the narrative world for his or her readers.³⁴⁴ He or she tells the reader exactly what he or she wants the reader to know and what he or she wants the reader to believe concerning the narrative world.

In *The Odyssey of Homer*, for example, the author begins the narrative by telling the reader that Odysseus was being held captive by a nymph goddess named Lady Calypso. As Odysseus longs to return home to his wife, the author tells the reader that the gods grew “compassionate”

³⁴² Bakhtin, “Toward a Reworking,” 298.

³⁴³ This is true of monologic discourse whether its fiction or non-fiction narrative. Although non-fiction narrative may be historical and factual, it still is a creation or re-creation of history that is controlled by the author. The author chooses what content to allow into the narrative and he or she also chooses how he or she does so. Furthermore, the content that the author does allow into his or her non-fiction narrative is revealed through the author’s outsidedness and subjective point of view. The author controls what the reader “sees” and how the reader “sees” it. Thus, all histories, all non-fictions, then are ideological—some more than others.

³⁴⁴ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 148, write that when expressed in monologic discourse, the
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toward him and that they also desired for his return to Ithaca, all except for Poseidon “whose enmity flamed ever against him.” Later in the narrative, the author tells the reader that Odysseus is “steadfast” and that Lady Calypso is “beautiful.”³⁴⁵

When reading for the dialogues of such a monologic discourse, the reader understands the author’s speech will and intent quite easily because the author has directly told his or her readers exactly what his or her speech will is concerning what the characters are like and how they are conscious. The reader understands that Odysseus is “steadfast,” that the Lady nymph is truly “beautiful” because the author has taken the position as the omniscient creator of the narrative world revealing these things directly to the reader from his monologic perspective.³⁴⁶ The author uses his or her monologic discourse to show that he or she considers his or her point of view to be the only true point of view concerning the narrative world.³⁴⁷

In Dialogue with Monologic Discourse: 2. Author-Character Relationships. When reading for the dialogues of an author’s monologic discourse, the reader will also recognize that the dialogic relationships between the author and the characters are weakened.³⁴⁸ The author’s monologic task does not allow the characters to become *fully valid voices* or *carriers of their own individual word on the boundary* of the author’s point of view. The author’s discourse and

authorial surplus “constitutes ultimate semantic authority.”

³⁴⁵ Homer, *The Odyssey of Homer* (trans. T. E. Lawrence; New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 1, 74.

³⁴⁶ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 238, write that in monologic works “the author’s truth informs the entire structure of the work, which cannot be comprehended without it. . . . However complex, ambiguous, or fraught with contradictions and doubt the author’s work may be, it never treats the truths of other consciousnesses as equals.”

³⁴⁷ If the reader were to interpret Odysseus not as “steadfast,” or the Lady Nymph as “ugly,” the reader would not be honoring the speech will of the author.

³⁴⁸ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of Prosaics*, 149, write concerning Bakhtin’s point on the dialogic relationships between author and characters, “He explains that no dialogic relations exist between the author and his character; they do not lie on the same plane and so they can neither dispute nor agree with each other.”

consciousness dominates and objectifies his or her characters' consciousnesses and their discourses. An author expresses his or her consciousness about the characters *monologically* by predominately writing with one of two styles of *single-voiced discourse* because the author desires his or her readers only to hear his or her own voice and point of view concerning the narrative world.

First, the author can write in single-voiced discourse by objectifying a character's consciousness with his or her own authorial "unmediated, direct, fully signifying discourse," Bakhtin points out.³⁴⁹ The author may, for example, explain what a certain character was thinking, what a character's motive was for acting in a particular way, or what a character is like – "compulsive," "arrogant," "humble," "evil," or "righteous." The author may also explain how a character is conscious toward another character as Homer did when he told the reader that the gods, except for Poseidon, were "compassionate" toward Odysseus.³⁵⁰ When reading for the dialogues of such monologic discourse, the reader recognizes that the author's consciousness is not on the boundary of his or her characters, but rather it transcends the boundaries of his or her characters with his or her authorial surplus in order to objectify and materialize the characters and their consciousnesses as fixed images.

Second, the author can use single-voiced discourse to allow one of his or her characters to speak, but only in a way that allows the author to still control that character's speech. The author maintains control of the characters' speech and consciousness by allowing his or her characters

³⁴⁹ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 186, explains "direct unmediated object-oriented discourse" when the author uses his or her discourse for the purpose of "naming, informing, expressing, representing.

³⁵⁰ Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," 35–36, writes that characters depicted through the *monologic* discourse of the author are depicted with "crystal clarity and artistic completedness" of an "image of man," which results in the "obvious woodenness" of the characters. The reader is not expected to question or test the finalizing and monologic judgment of the authorial point of view.

to speak only words that are “represented” or “objectified” discourse of the author’s consciousness. This happens, Bakhtin points out, when the author represents or objectifies a character’s words “in a way felt to be somehow characteristic or typical of the character as an individual or member of a social group.”³⁵¹ The author uses a character’s voice to project one of his or her point of views.

In *The Fountainhead*, for example, after allowing her characters to express their own point of views as carriers of their own truth for most of the narrative, Ayn Rand suddenly objectifies the speech of Ellsworth Toohey. Rand described Toohey outside of the narrative as someone with a “vicious, ingrown vanity coupled with an inane will to power, a lust for superiority that can be expressed only through others.”³⁵² In the narrative, she creates an interesting dialogue between the power hungry Toohey and Peter Keating, a character who questioned Toohey’s ethical standards in his attempt to gain power. Toohey responds to Keating’s questioning of his actions with a deconstructive rant of the ethical systems of various religions and philosophies. He says,

Every system of ethics that preached sacrifice grew into a world power and ruled millions of men. Of course, you must dress it up. You must tell people that they’ll achieve a superior kind of happiness by giving up everything that makes them happy. You don’t have to be clear about it. Use big vague words. ‘Universal Happiness’ – ‘Eternal Spirit’ – ‘Divine Purpose’ – ‘Nirvana’ – ‘Paradise’ – ‘Racial Supremacy’ – The Dictatorship of the Proletariat.’”³⁵³

³⁵¹ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 186–89, writes, “By far the most typical and widespread form of represented objectified discourse is the direct speech of characters.” The character’s speech “is treated precisely as someone else’s discourse . . . it is treated as an object of authorial understanding” and not from the autonomous view of the character. For further discussion on Bakhtin’s understanding of how authors use single-voiced discourse to characterize their characters see Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 149.

³⁵² Ayn Rand, *The Fountainhead* (Penguin Group: New York, 1971), 732. This excerpt was printed in the afterward. It was noted that this characterization of Ellsworth Toohey was made in Rand’s journal dated February 22, 1937 where she began to sketch Toohey’s character.

³⁵³ Rand, *The Fountainhead*, 666.

Religion and philosophy, Toohey seems to argue, exert power over people by coercing them into sacrificing what makes them happy in the name of being ethical.

However, the reader who has read Rand's philosophical works on *objectivism*, and her explanation of this narrative can sense that it is not just Toohey speaking to Keating here, but Rand's consciousness, which has objectified Toohey's speech discourse to project her own point of view of how religion and philosophy coerce people into living according to an ethical standard. The goal of *The Fountainhead*, she wrote, was to portray an "ideal moral man"—a man who aspires to an ultimate ethic.³⁵⁴ Rand's ideal ethic is free from the coercion of politics, philosophy, and most importantly free from the coercion of religion, which according to her, turns "morality against man," and make it "extremely difficult to communicate the emotional meaning and connotations of a rational view of life."³⁵⁵

The purpose, then, of writing *The Fountainhead*, for Rand, was to project a "man-worship." She sought to show "man's highest potential" devoid of religion, philosophy, and politics, and to persuade her readers to "strive to actualize" this potential without the help of these belief systems.³⁵⁶ Similarly, Rand's purpose of objectifying Ellsworth Toohey's speech to

³⁵⁴ Rand, *The Fountainhead*, ix, writes, "This is the motive and purpose of my writing: the projection of the ideal man.

³⁵⁵ Rand, *The Fountainhead*, ix–xi, writes, "I had to present the social system that makes it possible for ideal men to exist and function . . . 'But neither politics nor ethics nor philosophy is an end itself, neither in life nor in literature. Only Man is an end in himself.'" She continues, "Religion's monopoly in the field of ethics has made it extremely difficult to communicate the emotional meaning and connotations of a rational view of life. Just as religion has pre-empted the field of ethics, turning morality against man, so it has usurped the highest moral concepts of our language, placing them outside this earth and beyond man's reach."

³⁵⁶ Rand, *The Fountainhead*, xii, explains that the opposite of a "man-worshiper" is a "man-hater" who regards "man as a helpless, depraved, and contemptible creature" and who struggles to never "let him discover otherwise."

Peter Keating was to project her own deconstructive consciousness toward the ethics of the religions of her own world for her readers.³⁵⁷

Rand's objectification of Toohey's discourse may not look like single-voiced discourse, but rather like a double-voiced discourse that has incorporated already spoken words, such as "paradise" and "nirvana" (noted by the parenthesis). The "crucial fact," about words of this single-voiced discourse type, however, Morson and Emerson point out, is that "the character's speech is not shaped by his or her *awareness* of another's speech or consciousness."³⁵⁸ Instead, the author inserts his or her own words that reflect his or her own awareness and consciousness into the character's speech.

In other words, in the *Fountainhead*, the characters speak most often in response to those things of which they are aware—the things that have taken place in the narrative world created by Rand. They express their point of views in dialogue with the belief systems that Rand has allowed to be developed and expressed in the narrative world. Toohey's speech to Keating then suddenly begins a deconstructive rant, not against the belief systems developed in the narrative world, but rather against the various ethical systems that Rand opposed in the real world. Thus, by having Toohey speak against ideas and images that she opposed from the real world without developing these as ideas and images in the narrative world, Rand objectified his consciousness and represented his discourse by imposing an aesthetic finalization on him "from outside" the narrative world.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁷ Rand takes a shot at the ethics of religions, such as Buddhism by mentioning "Nirvana," and of Christianity by mentioning "Paradise."

³⁵⁸ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 149. Also Bakhtin, *Problems in Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 189, writes that objectified discourse "sounds as if it were direct single-voiced discourse." It becomes "an object, as it were, itself unaware of the fact, like the person who goes about his business unaware that he is being watched."

³⁵⁹ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 149.

In Dialogue with Monologic Discourse: 3. Character- Character Relationships. When reading for the dialogues of single-voiced monologic discourse, the reader may recognize how the characters interact with other characters in the narrative as if they are on the boundary of another character. However, because their consciousnesses and speech discourses are represented and objectified discourses by the monologic author, the characters' consciousnesses are not allowed to truly be on the boundary of other characters as their own autonomous views of themselves and of the world. These types of characters are not created for true dialogic interaction with other characters, but rather as objectified representations of the author's consciousness.³⁶⁰ The dialogic relationships between characters are, therefore, also weakened.

Bakhtin points to the works of Tolstoy as one such author who objectified his characters with his authorial consciousnesses and point of view. Tolstoy depicts death "from the inside looking out," Bakhtin writes, or "from the very consciousness of the dying person." He objectified the consciousnesses of his dying characters in a way that prevents the dying character's consciousness from entering the boundary of other characters. In order to depict death from within, Tolstoy had to "violate sharply the real-life verisimilitude of the narrator's position," Bakhtin argues, "as if the deceased himself had told him the story of his death."³⁶¹

In other words, Tolstoy's discourse style does not just allow the reader to hear the speech discourse or inner thoughts of a dying person, as if the dying person's consciousness is his own on the boundary of another character or the reader. Rather, Tolstoy transcends the boundary of the dying character's consciousness with his authorial surplus and his authorial consciousness.

³⁶⁰ Bakhtin, "Toward a Reworking," 289, writes that in monologic discourses, "Emotional experience arises inside the boundaries of an objectively determined sort, and not on the boundary between *I* and the *other*, that is, at a point of interaction of consciousness."

³⁶¹ Ibid.

He becomes one with the character's consciousness in order to objectify and materialize the dying person's consciousness. Tolstoy's use of this type of single-voiced monologic discourse shows that he was not interested in death for the other and on the boundary of another, Bakhtin argues, but "for the person's own sake, that is, for the dying person, almost as a fact of that consciousness."³⁶²

Authors that transcend a character's consciousness in such a way indicate they have a monologic aim for their discourse. Such authors deny their characters any ideological initiative of their own. The characters are "bounded, preformed, individualized by their various situations and destinies, but not by varying 'truths.'" These characters see and know in themselves "only the things that others," say about them, and most importantly what the author says about them.³⁶³ Characters depicted by the author's monologic discourse, Bakhtin observed, "organically die" and become mere objects of the author's consciousness instead of independent consciousnesses.³⁶⁴

In Dialogue with Monologic Discourse: 4. Reader-Characters Relationships. When reading for the dialogues of characters depicted by the author's monologic discourse, the reader will recognize that the dialogic relationships between him or her and the characters are also weak

³⁶² In essence, as he transcended the mind and consciousness of his dying character Tolstoy showed he was interested in death from his own perspective. See Bakhtin, "Toward a Reworking," 289–90, writes that it is as if "the deceased himself had told him the story of his death as Agamemnon did to Odysseus." Bakhtin, "Toward a Reworking," 252, also remarks on Tolstoy, "Tolstoy passes from one consciousness to another as if going from one room to another . . ." By doing so he showed that he did not acknowledge the "ultimate threshold"—the "unbridgeable (absolute) boundary between *I* and *another*." For Dostoevsky, portraying the "inner man" was only possible "by portraying his communion with another."

³⁶³ Ibid. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 8, argues that many Greek epics and tragedies portray their characters in this way. Bakhtin adds a distinction between Dostoevsky and the European novel as well in his study of the dialogic relationships of author and characters. He labels the European novel as monologic in this way.

³⁶⁴ Bakhtin, "Toward a Reworking," 300, writes that such characters become "objectified personages," and do not "take part in the great dialogue." Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," 35–36 also writes, "Outside his destiny, the epic and tragic hero is nothing," and so he is "a function of the plot fate assigned to him; he cannot become the hero of
(continued next page)

and limited. As the author increases the objectification of a character's *consciousness* he or she will also naturally decrease the potential for true dialogue and dialogic relationship between the character and reader. Since characters that are objectified and materialized by the author's consciousness lack an ideological initiative of their own, there is little or no dialogue between the reader and the characters because the characters are not allowed to become fully valid voices on the boundary of and in dialogue with the reader.³⁶⁵

When reading for the dialogues of the opening scene in Homer's *Odyssey*, the reader understands how the gods are conscious of Odysseus, not because the gods and Odysseus have been able to speak as carriers of their own truth on the boundary of each other and on the boundary of the reader, but because the author's consciousness has revealed these things to the reader. No open-ended dialogue has taken place among the author, the characters, and the reader. When the reader reads this type of monologic single-voiced discourse, the reader is only able to dialogue with the voice of the author *about* the characters.

As the author increases the objectification of a character's *discourse* he or she will also naturally decrease the potential for true dialogue and dialogic relationship between the character and reader.³⁶⁶ When reading for the dialogue of Ellsworth Toohey to Peter Keating, a reader may agree with Toohey that the ethical systems of particular religions such as Christianity and Buddhism only *coerce* a person into sacrificing one's self for a greater morality. Another reader

another destiny or another plot.”

³⁶⁵ Bakhtin, “Epic and Novel,” 35, points out that for such characters “there is nothing to seek for in him, nothing to guess at, he can neither be exposed nor provoked.” He also writes, “Neither world view nor language can, therefore, function as factors for limiting and determining human images, or their individualizations.”

³⁶⁶ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 188, writes, “As the direct, referential impulse of a character's words intensified and their objectification correspondingly decreased, the internal interrelationship between authorial speech and a character's speech begins to approach the interrelationship between two rejoinders in a dialogue. The perspectival relationship weakens, and they may come to occupy a single plain.”

may disagree with Toohey's assessment of how these religions teach and persuade their followers to live by an ethical standard. Yet, both of these readers' consciousnesses and their potential dialogues are not truly with and on the boundary of the character Ellsworth Toohey and his consciousness. Rather, the reader's dialogue is really in dialogue with and on the boundary of Ayn Rand's consciousness, who at this point in the narrative, has objectified Toohey's speech and absorbed his consciousness into her own personal and ideological view of religion.

ii. In Dialogue with the Dialogic or Novelistic Discourse of an Author: 1. Author-Reader Relationship. The novelistic author, like the author who chooses to use monologic discourse, is also "profoundly active" in projecting his or her point of view to the reader about the narrative world.³⁶⁷ The novelistic author's activity, however, is of a "special dialogic sort," Bakhtin explains. The reader can recognize that novelistic authors show their desire to be in strong dialogic relationship with their readers by using a discourse style that invites their readers into a true and tested dialogue about the narrative world.³⁶⁸

Authors invite their readers into open-ended dialogue by addressing their readers through *zones of contact*, which allow the objects of the narrative world to remain open, incomplete and changing.³⁶⁹ Instead of objectifying and finalizing the narrative world into a fixed and distant past

³⁶⁷ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 184. Even though an author may use novelistic discourse to allow his or her characters to be autonomous carriers of their word, the author's own word is spoken as an utterance, Bakhtin writes, a "creative will, a definite position, to which it is possible to react dialogically." See also Bakhtin, "Toward a Reworking," 248, writes, "Our point of view in no way assumes a passivity on the part of the author, who would merely assemble others' points of views, others' truths, completely denying his own point of view, his own truth."

³⁶⁸ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 18. Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," 62, writes, "The novel as a whole is an utterance just as rejoinders in everyday dialogue," and such "artistic genres, in spite of all the ways in which they differ from rejoinders in dialogue, are by nature the same kind of units of speech communication." Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 220, write, "To take on responsibility with respect to a discourse . . . to enter into dialogue with it is to test, assimilate, and reaccentuate it."

³⁶⁹ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 236. The main task of Dostoevsky's realism, according to Bakhtin could only be revealed "in an intense act of address." The element of address Bakhtin writes "is essential" (*continued next page*)

for the reader, the novelistic author restrains his or her authorial surplus. The open-ended quality that is created by the author's zone of contact allows a "close contact between the represented object and the contemporary reality" with the open, incomplete, and changing real world of the reader.³⁷⁰ Regardless of when the narrative was written or how foreign the setting may be to the reader's own world and time, the open-ended quality of an author's zone of contact invites the reader's voice to dialogue with the author about the unknown and the unfinalized things of the narrative world.³⁷¹

When interpreting a textual character, the reader can recognize an author's zone of contact by how he or she leaves certain aspects of a character unknown. This type of zone of contact may lead a reader to speculate concerning things such as a motive for why a certain character acted in a particular way.³⁷² The author can also create this open-ended and unfinalized quality by remaining on the boundary of his or her characters.³⁷³ The novelistic author does not allow his or

to all of Dostoevsky's works. Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," 31–32. The zone of contact allows an image in the narrative world, such as a character, to "acquire a specific actual existence." The narrative world acquires a relationship, he continued, "in one form or another, to one degree or another to the ongoing event of current life in which we, the author and readers, are intimately participating."

³⁷⁰ Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," 35, writes, "The destruction of the epic distance and the transferral of the image of an individual from the distanced plane to the zone of contact with the inconclusive events of the present (and consequently of the future) result in a radical re-structuring of the image of the individual in the novel."

³⁷¹ Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," 26–27, writes, "The novelist is drawn toward everything that is not yet completed." The zone of contact, therefore, allows the reader to "grab at everything with" his or her own hands. A reader, for example, may be led to speculate "what will happen next," Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," 32, writes, even after the narrative has come to an end.

³⁷² Ibid. "In distanced images," Bakhtin writes, "we have the whole event, and plot interest (that is, the condition of not knowing) is impossible. The novel, however, speculates into what is unknown." This is what Meir Sternberg meant by the reader having to "fill in the gaps" of what is unknown. Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 231, for example, shows how the biblical reader may wonder if Uriah the Hittite turned down King David's invitation to go home to his wife Bathsheba because he knew that the king had an affair with his wife, or if Uriah truly believed that going home to his wife would dishonor his fellow soldiers who were away from their wives in war. If the author was writing with monologic direct discourse, he or she would leave no room for the reader to speculate. Instead, the author would directly tell the reader what particular motive a certain character had for acting in a specific way.

³⁷³ Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," 36. Characters of novelistic discourse are not "an already completed and
(continued next page)

her consciousness and his or her authorial surplus to transcend or absorb other consciousnesses into his or her own her single consciousness. Rather, he or she creates a narrative world where many consciousnesses including the reader's consciousness, are able to interact and respond to each other on the boundary of each other and in true open-ended dialogue with each other.³⁷⁴

The novelistic author can remain on the boundary of his or her characters and create a plurality of voices in dialogue with each other by *refracting* his or her point of view in various ways and to various degrees, which Bakhtin explains, distances the author's speech from the speech discourses of the narrative.³⁷⁵ The author can, for instance, refract his or her point of view internally by creating a hybridization of a character's speech that is formed with pieces of the character's speech and pieces of his or her authorial speech or another person's speech to which the author is opposed to in some way.³⁷⁶ These inserted words allow the narrator or character to make value judgments that are "infected with others' intentions," Bakhtin writes, "with which

unchanging person." What must be "discovered" when interpreting such a character is "not the specific existence of the hero, not his fixed image," Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 48, argues, "but the sum total of his consciousness and self-consciousness, ultimately the hero's final word on himself and his world."

³⁷⁴ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 18, writes that novelistic discourses are "constructed not as the whole of a single consciousness, absorbing other consciousnesses as objects into itself, but as a whole formed by the interaction of several consciousnesses, none of which entirely becomes an object for the other."

³⁷⁵ Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 299, explains that the author "can make use of language without wholly giving himself up to it, he may treat it as semi-alien or completely alien to himself, while compelling language ultimately to serve all his own intentions." Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 315, writes, "Such a refracting of authorial intentions takes place in all forms (the narrator's tale, the tale of a posited author or that of one of the characters); it is therefore possible to have in them, as in the comic novel, a variety of different distances between distinct aspects of the narrator's language and the author's language: the refraction may be at times greater, at times lesser, and in some aspects of language there may be an almost complete fusion of voices."

³⁷⁶ Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 358, writes, "What is hybridization? It is a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, but social differentiation or by some other factor."

the author is to some extent at odds, and through which his own personal intentions are refracted.”³⁷⁷

Bakhtin offers many examples of how Charles Dickens, for instance, refracts his authorial point of view to the reader through a hybrid of speech discourses in the novel *Little Dorrit*.

Dickens describes a dinner scene hosted by a wealthy man named Merdle as he writes,

It was a dinner to provoke an appetite, though he had not had one. The rarest dishes, sumptuously served; the choicest fruits, the most exquisite wines; marvels of workmanship in gold and silver, china and glass; innumerable things delicious to the senses of taste, smell, and sight, were insinuated into his composition. *O, what a wonderful man this Merdle, what a great man, what a master man, how blessedly and enviably endowed—in one word, what a rich man!*³⁷⁸

Dickens addresses the reader with his point of view of Merdle here by creating a hybrid of his speech and the concealed speech of “a chorus” of his admirers (the italicized portion), heard in the words “wonderful,” “great,” “master,” and “endowed.”³⁷⁹ Dickens exposes these words, which would glorify Merdle, Bakhtin argued, with his final indignant, ironic, and unmasking words of Merdle—“in one word, what a rich man!”³⁸⁰ Yet, he does so in a way that does not finalize Merdle, but rather allows his authorial point of view to remain on the boundary of the characters and on the boundary of the reader.

³⁷⁷ In Turgenev, Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” 316, points out, different points of view and speech discourses enter the novel through the direct speech of characters. But the characters’ discourses contain “authorial speech that surrounds the characters, creating highly particularized *character zones*. These zones, he wrote, are formed from “the fragments of character speech, from various forms for hidden transmission of someone else’s word, from scattered words and sayings belonging to someone else’s speech . . . Such a character zone is a field of action for a character’s voice, encroaching in one way or another upon the author’s voice.

³⁷⁸ Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” 304, citing book 2, chapter 12 of Charles Dickens and Hablot Knight Browne, *Little Dorrit* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953).

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.* While this utterance is understood “by its grammatical (syntactic) and compositional markers” to have been spoken by the author alone, it actually contains mixed within it, Bakhtin explains, “two utterances, two speech manners, two styles, two ‘languages, two semantic and axiological belief systems.” See other examples of Bakhtin’s analysis of refraction through various forms of hybridization in “Discourse in the Novel,” 301–66.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

The author can also achieve this distance between his speech discourse and the speech discourses of the narrative by creating a narrator or character to refract his or her point of view in a dialogue with another character.³⁸¹ Such is the case, for example, in *The Double*, where Dostoevsky addresses his readers through the voice of a narrator. In one scene, the narrator speaks to the reader concerning the hesitation of Golyadkin to enter a dance. The narrator's consciousness engages the reader about Golyadkin while on the boundary of Golyadkin - from outside Golyadkin's consciousness. He tells the reader that Golyadkin is standing outside the "ball"—in a "passage from the back entrance of Olsufy Ivanovich's flat." The narrator continues by telling the reader that Golyadkin is "half concealed by an enormous cupboard and an old screen, among every kind of dusty rubbish, trash, and lumber," and that he is "hiding" until the proper time to enter.³⁸²

The narrator then begins to offer his point of view concerning Golyadkin, which the reader can sense is also a refraction of Dostoevsky's point of view of Golyadkin. The narrator uses double-voiced discourse by incorporating the very words that Golyadkin had already spoken concerning himself into his address to the reader. He acknowledges that these are Golyadkin's words by placing them in quotation marks. He tells the reader that Golyadkin "is all right" and that he is "on his own."³⁸³ The narrator uses Golyadkin's own words about himself to imply to the reader that Golyadkin is not really "all right," and then makes his taunt toward Golyadkin

³⁸¹ It will be shown how later in this chapter how Dostoevsky refracts his point of view about certain characters through a narrator's voice or another character's voice.

³⁸² See Bakhtin's analysis of this passage in "The Double" in *Problems in Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 218.

³⁸³ Ibid.

explicit with a ridiculing and reproaching sideward glance at Golyadkin. He directly addresses Golyadkin, “Oh you, bit player, you!”³⁸⁴

Thus, Dostoevsky creates zones of contact with his reader by leaving his characters unfinalized, but also by addressing his reader with his point of view in a way that allowed his consciousness, Golyadkin’s consciousness, and the reader’s consciousness to remain on the boundaries of each other. It is on these boundaries among his consciousness, his characters’ consciousnesses, and the reader’s consciousness that Dostoevsky brings to life the true complexities of dialogue. By incorporating Golyadkin’s very words into his discourse, the narrator speaks in double-voiced discourse to address both Golyadkin and the reader. Golyadkin may have claimed that he was “all right,” but Dostoevsky calls Golyadkin’s self-assessment into question for the reader through the narrator’s description of him “hiding” and “half concealed” and through the narrator’s sideward glance and ridiculing barb that addresses Golyadkin on the boundary of his consciousness.

When reading for the dialogues of the novelistic author, the goal of the reader is to study how the author is conscious of himself or herself and of his or her narrative world. The reader is invited to dialogue with the author concerning the unfinalized quality of the narrative, such as a character’s consciousness and speech. The reader is also invited to dialogue with the author’s actively communicated point of view, which remains on the boundary of his or her characters. The reader is able to understand how the author is conscious of his or her characters by examining the refractions of his or her point of view. The dialogic reader then responds to the author’s point of view with his or her own agreement, disagreement, or with his or her own sideward glance toward the author’s discourse.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

In Dialogue with the Dialogic or Novelistic Discourse of an Author: 2. Author-Characters Relationships. The reader also recognizes that an author desires to be in dialogic relationship with his or her characters by the way the author allows his or her point of view to be in dialogue with the characters' speeches and consciousnesses. The novelistic author may actively address his or her characters with his or her point of view, but the novelistic author does so in a way that does not transcend that character's consciousness as happens when an author speaks with a monologic discourse.³⁸⁵ The novelistic author speaks in a way that remains *on the boundary of* and in dialogic relationship with his or her characters so that his or her characters have a fully valid and autonomous voice free from the author's consciousness.³⁸⁶

Bakhtin's analysis of the discourse in *Little Dorrit* shows how Dickens expressed his point of view, but not for the purpose of finalization and objectification. As Dickens refracted his point of view of Merdle with an ironic and indignant tone toward the concealed speech of those who admired Merdle for his wealth, he did not finalize or objectify Merdle as a "rich snob." Instead, he allowed his point of view of Merdle to remain on the boundary of those who admired Merdle for his wealth.

Bakhtin's analysis of Dostoevsky's dialogic discourse toward his character Golyadkin also shows how Dostoevsky's authorial point of view and surplus of vision were not used "for

³⁸⁵ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 251, writes, "A character's self-consciousness in Dostoevsky is thoroughly dialogized: in its every aspect it is turned outward, intensely addressing itself, another, a third person. . . In this sense it could be said that the person in Dostoevsky is the *subject of an address*."

³⁸⁶ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 68, writes that the novelistic author does not "transform others' consciousnesses (that is, the consciousnesses of the characters) into objects, and does not give them secondhand and finalizing definitions. Alongside and in front of itself it senses others' equally valid consciousnesses, just as infinite and open-ended as itself." The author, he explained, "does not speak in a given language (from which he distances himself to a greater or lesser degree), but he speaks, as it were, *through* language."

materialization and finalization,” but for “open and honest” dialogue.³⁸⁷ In fact, by using Golyadkin’s very words, Dostoevsky “gives the impression that the narration is dialogically addressed” to Golyadkin himself, Bakhtin argues.³⁸⁸ Dostoevsky even directly addresses and taunts Golyadkin in the second person voice, “oh you, bit player, you.” True open-ended dialogue then takes place as the first line that Golyadkin speaks, Bakhtin points out, is “quite often an obvious response” to the preceding discourse of the narrator.³⁸⁹

While Dostoevsky’s consciousness actively addresses the reader about Golyadkin through the address of the narrator, he also did not allow his authorial surplus to finalize or objectify Golyadkin for the reader by telling what he was “like” or what he was thinking as a monologic author would have done.³⁹⁰ Dostoevsky does not transcend the boundary of Golyadkin’s consciousness, but rather remains on the boundary of his consciousness, in order to allow Golyadkin to express his own point of view and truth.³⁹¹ Even if he spoke about characters, it is as if he allowed those characters, Bakhtin writes, to “hear everything that is said by others about

³⁸⁷ Bakhtin, “Toward a Reworking,” 299, writes, “But the real question is Dostoevsky’s use of this surplus. Not for materialization and finalization. . . This surplus is never used as an ambush, a chance to sneak up and attack from behind. This is an open and honest surplus, dialogically revealed to the other person, a surplus expressed by the addressed and not by the secondhand word.”

³⁸⁸ Bakhtin, *Problems in Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 217–18, writes, “The narrator picks up on Golyadkin’s words and thoughts, intensifies the teasing, mocking tones embedded in them, and in these tones portrays Golyadkin’s every act, every gesture, every movement.”

³⁸⁹ Ibid. See also Bakhtin, *Problems in Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 225, writes, thus that “one gets the impression that the narration is dialogically addressed to Golyadkin himself, it rings in Golyadkin’s own ears as another’s voice taunting him, as the voice of the double, although formally the narration is addressed to the reader.”

³⁹⁰ Bakhtin, *Problems in Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 225, points out that while Dostoevsky’s narrator sometimes seems “fettered to his hero’s back,” in that he sees everything the hero sees and more, the narrator’s surplus of vision and perspective is one that is not able to offer “an artistically finalizing summation of the hero’s image or of his acts as a whole.”

³⁹¹ Bakhtin, *Problems in Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 5, writes that in Dostoevsky’s works, “The character is treated as ideologically authoritative and independent; he is perceived as the author of a fully weighted ideological conception of his own, and not as the object of Dostoevsky’s finalizing artistic vision.” It is as if the character was “not an object of authorial discourse, but rather a fully valid, autonomous carrier of his own individual word.”

them, and respond to everything (nothing is said about them secondhand or behind closed doors).”³⁹²

Thus, Dostoevsky is not interested in his characters as fixed images of plot or personality traits. As Bakhtin points out, Dostoevsky is interested in “a particular point of view on the world and on oneself, as the position enabling a person to interpret and evaluate his own self and his surrounding reality.”³⁹³ He does not first work out a structure, plan, or overall plot of his work that reduces his characters to fixed images, but rather he creates “idea-heroes” and “integral voices” of a dialogue on the boundary of each other.³⁹⁴ Dostoevsky addresses his characters with his point of view, Bakhtin explains, but he did so in a way that did not “transform” his characters into objects of his authorial consciousness.³⁹⁵ He created his narrative world to imitate the dialogic reality of the open-ended and unfinalized real world by allowing his characters to express their own point of view on the boundary of his own point of view and other characters’ point of views.

³⁹² Bakhtin, “Toward a Reworking,” 297. See also Bakhtin, “Epic and Novel,” 36. Instead of being objectified by the author’s direct and objectified discourse about them, characters portrayed with novelistic discourse remain open, Bakhtin points out, by retaining “a happy surplus of their own.”

³⁹³ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 5–6, writes that Dostoevsky allowed his characters to speak as *autonomous carriers* of their own *individual word*. They are “fully valid voices and not only objects of authorial discourse but also subjects of their own directly signifying discourse. . . . A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky’s novels.”

³⁹⁴ Bakhtin, “Toward a Reworking,” 296. According to Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 18, the dialogic relationships that Dostoevsky created between himself and his characters are so strong that his novels are the “ultimate *polyphonic*” novels with the “ultimate dialogicality.”

³⁹⁵ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 7, writes that for Dostoevsky, “The consciousness of a character is given as someone else’s consciousness, another consciousness, yet at the same time it is not turned into an object, is not closed, does not become a simple object of the author’s consciousness.” Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 68, also writes that in this way, “The author’s consciousness does not transform other’s consciousness (that is the consciousness of the characters) into objects, and he does not give them secondhand and finalizing definitions.”

In Dialogue with the Dialogic or Novelistic Discourse of an Author: 3. Character-Character Relationships. As the reader reads for the dialogues of novelistic discourse, he or she recognizes that the characters are allowed to have strong dialogic relationships with each other as well. The reader will recognize that the element of address is essential not just to the author or narrator's discourse, but it is also important to the discourses of the characters that are allowed to be on the boundary of other characters.³⁹⁶ Novelistic characters do not just speak words. They are allowed to address other characters with their own "ideological initiative." This ideological address enables the reader to see that the characters are not wooden images or mere carriers of personality traits.³⁹⁷ As carriers of their own truth, Dostoevsky's characters "do furious battle," Bakhtin observed, with finalizing definitions of their personality "in the mouths of other people."³⁹⁸

The reader will also recognize that the characters reveal their consciousnesses and their ideological initiative in speech and in acts that are "determined by a relationship toward another consciousness (toward a *thou*)."³⁹⁹ In fact, Dostoevsky even depicts the inner man dialogically by portraying his or her consciousness in "communion with another," Bakhtin points out.⁴⁰⁰ The

³⁹⁶ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 236–37, writes, "The element of address is essential to every discourse in Dostoevsky, narrative discourse as well as the discourse of the hero."

³⁹⁷ Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," 38.

³⁹⁸ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 59, points out, "In Dostoevsky's subsequent works, the characters no longer carry a literary polemic with finalizing secondhand definitions of man . . . but they all do furious battle with such definitions of their personality in the mouths of other people. They all acutely sense their own unfinalizability, their capacity to outgrow, as it were, from within and to render untrue any externalizing and finalizing definition of them." Thus, "Dostoevsky's hero always seeks to destroy the framework of the *other people's* words about him that might finalize and deaden him." The Underground Man advances a fundamental truth of the dialogic reality Bakhtin asserts—"that man is not a final and defined quantity upon which firm calculations can be made; man is free and can therefore violate any regulating norms which might be thrust upon him."

³⁹⁹ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 252, writes, "Only in communion, in the interaction of one person with another, can the 'man in man' be revealed, for others as well as for oneself."

⁴⁰⁰ According to Bakhtin, "Toward a Reworking," 287, Dostoevsky's characters exemplify what it means "to
(continued next page)

essential features of Dostoevsky's characterization are exhibited not by that which takes place within, he argued, but by that which takes place "on the boundary between one's own and someone else's consciousness, on the threshold."⁴⁰¹ The dialogic reader enters into dialogue with his characters by reading for the dialogues that takes place between characters on the boundary of others.⁴⁰²

Finally, when the reader reads for the dialogues of characters who are allowed to be their own fully valid voice on the boundary of others, the dialogic reader recognizes also the dialogic relationships that are created among the discourses.⁴⁰³ The *double-voiced nature of the word* is revealed in Dostoevsky's work with "enormous force and with an acute palpability," Bakhtin claimed, as characters are allowed to live on the boundary of others. His characters speak by incorporating another character's words in order to stylize or parody the other character's intention. They also respond or anticipate another character's discourse with a sideward glance, a word with a loophole, or a penetrating word into another character's consciousness. By recognizing the relationships these discourses have to other already spoken words, the reader is able to better understand how the characters are conscious of themselves and of other characters.

be for another and through the other, for oneself."

⁴⁰¹ Bakhtin, "Toward a Reworking," 290, writes that in contrast to Tolstoy, Dostoevsky "never depicts death from within, but rather final agony and death are observed by others." In other words, "Death in Dostoevsky's world is always an objective fact for other consciousnesses," he explains, "what Dostoevsky foregrounds are privileges of the other." However, in Tolstoy's world, Bakhtin points out, "another's consciousness is always depicted possessing a certain minimum of materialization (objectification); thus there is no unbridgeable chasm between death from within (for the dying person himself) and death from without (for another): in fact they converge."

⁴⁰² Bakhtin, "Toward a Reworking," 287, writes, "The most important acts constituting self-consciousness are determined by a relationship toward another consciousness (toward a *thou*). Literature, in general, Bakhtin argues, imitates the "actuality" of how a person exists in the forms of *I* and *another*."

⁴⁰³ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 185, offers examples of the discourse styles that a number of Dostoevsky's characters speak on pages 204–66.

In Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, Ivan and Alyosha speak in dialogue with each other as carriers of their own truths, free from Dostoevsky's consciousness. As they express themselves for each other, the reader can see how Ivan and Alyosha are conscious of themselves and of each other by examining the dialogical relationships that their speech expressions have to each other's discourses and consciousnesses. Ivan and Alyosha consider who could have murdered their father. While Ivan believes fully in Dmitry's guilt, Bakhtin points to how Ivan "begins to pose the question of his own guilt." It is at this point the following dialogue between Ivan and Alyosha takes place:

"Who is the murderer then, according to you?" he [Ivan – M.B] asked, with apparent coldness. . . . "You know who," Alyosha pronounced in a low penetrating voice. . . . "Who? Who?" Ivan cried almost fiercely. All his restraint suddenly vanished. "I only know one thing," Alyosha went on, still almost in a whisper, "**it wasn't you** who killed father." "Not you! What do you mean by 'not you'?" Ivan was thunderstruck. "It was not you who killed father, not you!" Alyosha repeated firmly. The silence lasted for half a minute. "I know I didn't. Are you raving?" said Ivan, with a pale, distorted smile. His eyes were riveted on Alyosha.⁴⁰⁴

In this dialogue Alyosha addresses what Ivan has only asked himself in an internal dialogue. Alyosha, Bakhtin writes, senses that his brother, Ivan, is struggling with guilt. Dostoevsky, therefore, allows Alyosha to penetrate Ivan's consciousness with Ivan's secret words about his possible role in his father's murder, which then show Ivan's consciousness to evoke a response of repulsion and hatred toward Alyosha. Alyosha foresees, Bakhtin explains, that Ivan "will inevitably sooner or later give himself the categorically affirmative answer: I am the murderer." In Dostoevsky's dialogic world, "Ivan could not have given himself any other answer," he argued. Rather, it is Alyosha's word that "must make itself useful precisely as the word of

⁴⁰⁴ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 255, citing Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, pt. 4, bk. 11, chap. v., 117–18.

another.”⁴⁰⁵

When reading for the dialogues, the reader recognizes that Alyosha is doing more than just responding to Ivan. Alyosha is taking a sideward glance toward Ivan’s guilt stricken consciousness. Ivan never confesses his guilt to his brother, and yet Alyosha responds to his guilt ridden conscious with a polemically charged denial of the possibility that Ivan is the murderer, “I only know one thing . . . it wasn’t you who killed father.” The reader then recognizes that Ivan does not just respond to Alyosha’s sideward glance, but he responds with a vari-directional parodic discourse. Ivan incorporates Alyosha’s words into his own discourse against Alyosha’s for the sake of disagreeing with his brother’s words. Ivan speaks his word with the same penetrative force that Alyosha spoke toward him, “Not you! What do you mean by ‘not you’?” Ivan then turns his parodic use of Alyosha’s words into a sarcastic stylization, “I know I didn’t.” The double-voiced discourse of the *Brothers Karamazov*, Bakhtin writes, shows the power of the “penetrative word,” and its “artistic role in dialogue.”⁴⁰⁶

Even the internal thoughts and dialogues that Dostoevsky allows his characters to think or speak, Bakhtin argues, end up on the boundary of another and in dialogue with already spoken or anticipated words.⁴⁰⁷ In Dostoevsky’s *Poor Folk*, Devushkin, after describing the “kitchen” he lives in as “clean, light, and very nice,” anticipates what someone may say concerning his living

⁴⁰⁵ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 255–56.

⁴⁰⁶ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 255, points out that the dialogue between the brothers “is a highly typical example of the penetrative word and its artistic role in dialogue.” Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 249–50, explains that the penetrative word, he wrote, is a word without a sideward glance, a loophole, or an internal polemic. It only occurs in actual dialogue. It is used to move another person to join one’s one point of view or confession. “On the level of religious ideology,” Bakhtin writes, it calls another “to join the chorus and proclaim ‘Hosanna!’”

⁴⁰⁷ Even that which is internal, Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 59, writes “gravitates not toward itself, but is turned to the outside and dialogized.” With great agony Dostoevsky’s *The Underground Man*, “eavesdrops on all actual and potential words others say of him.”

in a kitchen. He casts a sideward glance at such a possible opinion as he thinks to himself the following dialogue:

“Well, so that is my little corner. So don’t you imagine, my darling, there is anything else about it, any mysterious significance in it; ‘here he is living in a kitchen!’ . . . It is true that there are better lodgings – perhaps there may be much better, but convenience is the great thing.”⁴⁰⁸

Devushkin, Bakhtin writes, tries to “outguess and outwit all possible definitions of his personality others might offer.”⁴⁰⁹

When reading Devushkin’s discourse about living in the kitchen, the reader is able to see how Devushkin directs his discourse not only at someone else, but at someone else’s words in order to polemically destroy “someone else’s words about him” living in the kitchen. The reader can recognize how his “self-awareness was penetrated by someone else’s consciousness of him,” Bakhtin explains, and then his “own self-utterance was injected with someone else’s words about him.” It is someone else’s consciousness and someone else’s words that “give rise to specific phenomena that determine the thematic development of Devushkin’s self-awareness,” he points out.⁴¹⁰

In Dialogue with the Dialogic or Novelistic Discourse of an Author: 4. Reader-Character Relationship. If the characters are depicted by an author’s *dialogic* or *novelistic discourse*, the dialogic relationship between the reader and characters will also be strong. The reader will recognize that the author invites the reader not just to dialogue about the characters, but also to dialogue with the characters of the narrative world. Again, the author uses *zones of*

⁴⁰⁸ As quoted from Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 206

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 209. The “phenomena” that Bakhtin identifies of his discourse are its “breaking points, loopholes, and protests” as well as its “accidental interruptions, syntactic breaking points, (continued next page)

contact to move the characters from being fixed images of a distant past into *a real presence* and a dramatic *contemporary reality* with the readers. The zone of contact allows a character to become a carrier of his or her own truth free from the objectifying consciousness of the author so that he or she can become a dialogue partner living on the boundary of others, including the reader.⁴¹¹ Only in novelistic discourse, Bakhtin writes, is it possible to have a “zone where there is proximity and contact” between characters and readers.⁴¹²

The reader dialogues with the characters in an indirect way by reading for the dialogues that take place on the boundary between characters. The “orientation of one person to another person’s discourse and conscious is, in essence,” Bakhtin writes, “the basic theme of all of Dostoevsky’s works.”⁴¹³ The reader can understand how characters such as Ivan and Alyosha are conscious of one another, or in the case of Devushkin, how he is self-conscious of himself and others as these characters express themselves to other characters. When reading for these dialogues between characters, the goal of the dialogic reader is not to answer the question of “who” a character is, but rather to understand how a character would answer to another character the questions: “Who am I?” and “Who are you?”⁴¹⁴

repetitions, reservations, and long-windedness.”

⁴¹¹ Bakhtin, “Toward a Reworking,” 293–94, writes that literature can create “utterly specific images of people, where *I* and *another* are combined in a special unrepeatable way: *I* in the form of *another* or *another* in the form of *I*.” Dostoevsky, for example, showed his characters to be revealed “as an encounter of the deepest *I* with *another* and with others (with the folk), as an encounter of *I* and the *other* on the highest level or in the ultimate instance.”

⁴¹² Bakhtin, “Epic and Novel,” 32. This zone brings the characters into the reader’s own “contemporary reality.” According to McCracken, “Character In The Boundary,” 36, this existence in a “real presence” brings the character into “a dramatic contemporaneity with the reader,” which constitutes a “dialogical relationship with the reader.”

⁴¹³ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 207, writes, “The hero’s attitude toward himself is inseparably bound up with his attitude toward another and with the attitude of another toward him. . . ‘I for myself’ against the background of ‘I for another.’”

⁴¹⁴ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 251, thus writes, “Dostoevsky’s works contain no final, (continued next page)

In addition to reading for the dialogues of the characters between characters, the reader may enter onto the boundary of a character in a more direct way Bakhtin explains, if the author allows a character to directly address the reader. Dostoevsky allows his characters to directly address his readers quite often in confessional speeches, which also allow the reader to understand how a character is conscious of himself or herself and others. “While speaking with himself, with another, with the world,” Dostoevsky’s hero from the underground simultaneously addresses the reader as well, Bakhtin explains. It is as if he “squints his eyes to the side, toward the listener, the witness.”⁴¹⁵

The hero from the underground, for example, addresses the reader about his dreams in which he was “triumphant over everyone,” how he “forgave them all,” and he lived as “a famous poet” who “fell in love” and “inherited countless millions and immediately devoted them to humanity.” The hero anticipates that the reader may possibly see him as arrogant, and so he addresses the reader with a second confession:⁴¹⁶

And at the same time I confessed before all the people my shameful deeds, which of course, were not merely shameful, but contained an enormous amount of ‘the sublime and the beautiful,’ something in the Manfred style. Everyone would weep and kiss me (what idiots they would be if they did not), while I would go barefoot and hungry preaching new ideas and fighting a victorious Austerlitz against the reactionaries.⁴¹⁷

Here, the hero from the underground tempers his ego by confessing that he has done “shameful

finalizing discourse that defines anything once and forever. . . Discourse of the hero and discourse about the hero are determined by an open dialogic attitude toward oneself and toward the other.”

⁴¹⁵ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 237.

⁴¹⁶ The word with a loophole also has enormous significance in the double-voiced discourses of Dostoevsky’s characters. Loopholes appear often in a character’s confession or self-defining words about him or her self. The reader can recognize loopholes in Ivan and Devushkin’s confessions and self-defining discourses. However, Bakhtin points to the confession of the hero from the underground in Dostoevsky’s *Notes From The Underground* as containing a great example of the word with a loophole.

⁴¹⁷ The words italicized show the word with a loophole. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 233, citing Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground*, pt. 2, chap. 2, 181.

deeds.” Yet, he just as quickly softens his confession with his loophole that these shameful deeds “were not merely shameful, but contained an enormous amount of the ‘sublime and the beautiful.’”⁴¹⁸

According to Bakhtin, although the hero “casts a parodic light” on his dreams, his very next words “betray the fact that his repentant confession of his dreams has its own loophole.”

The hero from the underground addresses the reader with a second loophole:

You will say that is it vulgar and base to drag all this into public after all the tears and raptures I have myself admitted. But why is it base? Can you imagine that I am ashamed of it all, and that it was stupider than anything in your life, gentlemen?

While the hero from the underground acknowledges that the reader may see his ego as “vulgar,” he tries to gain the respect of his reader by saying that he is “ashamed” of his ego. Such loopholes, Bakhtin writes, allow a character to speak with a “special type of fictive ultimate word about oneself with an unclosed tone to it.” At the same time, he observed, they are “obtrusively peering” into the reader’s eyes, demanding from him or her “a sincere refutation.”⁴¹⁹

As the reader reads for the dialogues of novelistic discourse, and becomes a dialogue partner of the characters, he or she enters onto the boundary of the consciousnesses of the characters. The *zones of contact* allow the characters to be their own carriers of their own word on the boundary of other characters, but also on the boundary of the reader. The dialogic reader is not to become a mere “analyzer” of characters, but a dialogue partner with the characters of

⁴¹⁸ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 234.

⁴¹⁹ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 233–34. The word with a loophole has “enormous significance” in the double-voiced discourses of Dostoevsky’s characters. Loopholes appear often in a character’s confession or self-defining words about him or her self. The reader can recognize loopholes in Ivan and Devushkin’s confessions and self-defining discourses. However, Bakhtin points to this confession of the hero from the underground in Dostoevsky’s *Notes From The Underground* as the ultimate example of the word with a loophole. The loophole, Bakhtin writes “makes all the heroes’ self-definitions unstable, the word in them has not hard and fast meaning, and at any moment, like a chameleon, it is ready to change its tone and its ultimate meaning.”

the narrative world.⁴²⁰ He or she may respond to Devushkin's defense of living in the kitchen with agreement that it is not that odd for him to live in "his little corner" in "the kitchen." The reader may also respond to him or the hero from the underground's consciousness with the ridiculing response that Devushkin and the hero from the underground are both self-consciously anticipating. The reader may not even care if Devushkin is living in the kitchen, or about the hero from the undergrounds boastful dream, but simply take a sideward glance at his petty and paranoid consciousnesses.

III. Conclusion

A. The Value of Bakhtin's Dialogic Approach for Interpreting Narrative Discourses and Textual Characters

Bakhtin's dialogic approach may frustrate those who desire a linguistic model or formula that is able to objectify the meanings of a narrative discourse. Speech communication in real life, as well in novelistic literature, for Bakhtin, can not be reduced to linguistic systems and formulas. Speech communication is created in the *living impulses* of individuals who are *carriers of their own truth*, and it can only be practiced and learned on the *boundary of* or in relationship with other people. The meaning of speech discourses are determined, therefore, by more than just linguistic phenomena. The meaning of a person's speech discourse is created and shaped by the relationships that people have to other people and to the discourses that other people have already spoken.

As we speak and listen, and as we read and respond, we learn how to interpret another person's discourse and his or her consciousness on the boundary of the other person. We learn

⁴²⁰ Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 249, write concerning Bakhtin's analysis of Dostoevsky, "Dostoevsky's novels are designed to turn the readers not into analyzers of character, action, and circumstances, but into dialogic partners of the characters and author." They continue, "For the reader, as well as the characters, it is (*continued next page*)

through experience to sense and understand another person's speech will and learn how to master another person's speech genres and their various forms. We even learn how to *re-accentuate* these forms of speeches in our own unique way in the more intimate dialogic relationships we encounter. In other words, we learn through the experience of dialogue how to dialogue with other people.

Bakhtin's dialogic approach to reading for the dialogues does not offer the reader some kind of system or formula to follow, but rather teaches the reader basic truths of a *dialogic* reality and the basic principles of dialogic interpretation. His approach may frustrate those who are used to formalist and structuralist methodologies that reduce characters to plot functions or action. However, Dostoevsky's use of dialogic discourse, Bakhtin argues, shows for example, how the life of "the Underground Man" is "absolutely devoid of any plot."⁴²¹ Such characters are expressed by their speech discourses more than their predetermined action. Dialogue, in Dostoevsky, rises above plot.⁴²²

Bakhtin's approach may also frustrate those who are used to interpreting textual characters with Chatman's "paradigm of traits" methodology. The Underground Man can not be reduced, Bakhtin argues, to a "carrier of traits and qualities" that are "neutral toward his self consciousness" and that are able to "finalize" him. The Underground Man "dissolves in himself

impossible to be just an 'eyewitness.'"

⁴²¹ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 252–53, writes, "The potential endlessness of dialogue is Dostoevsky's design already in itself answers the question why such dialogue cannot be plot-dependent in the strict sense of the word for a plot-dependent dialogue strives towards conclusion just as inevitably as does the plot of which it is in fact a component. Therefore dialogue in Dostoevsky is, as we have said, always external to the plot . . . dialogue is prepared by the plot."

⁴²² Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 265, writes, "The peaks of the dialogues rise above the plot."

all possible fixed features of his person, making them all his own introspection,” and he no longer even “has any such traits.”⁴²³

Bakhtin’s dialogic approach is valuable because it helps the reader to examine the dialogic reality of dialogue. Bakhtin explains what the dialogic reader already, yet most likely unknowingly, does as he or she engages the novelistic author and characters in open-ended dialogue. He *explains* how authors author dialogically. He *explains* how and why authors and characters speak dialogically, and how the reader interacts dialogically with them in a way that honors his or her own outsideness and also the intent of the author and characters’ speech discourses.

Thus, dialogic readers do not interpret characters depicted by novelistic discourse simply by reading for plot or by building paradigms of traits, nor do they read to simply deconstruct ideologies. Dialogic readers read for the dialogues—the dialogues of the author and the characters. They read to participate in the dialogues as a dialogic consciousness on the boundary of both author and characters. The dialogic reader seeks to understand how the author and characters may be conscious of themselves and of each other by also studying the dialogic relationships that their discourses have to other discourses.

With metalinguistic analysis, the dialogic reader recognizes how the author and characters use a speech discourse as monologic or dialogic, as single-voiced discourse or double-voiced, in the form of stylization or parody, loophole or hidden polemic. The way people use words, Bakhtin showed, tells much about how they view the people they speak to and the world they

⁴²³ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 51. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 47, also writes, “The hero interests Dostoevsky not as some manifestation of reality that possesses fixed and specific socially typical or individually characteristic traits, nor as a specific socially typical or individually characteristic traits, nor as a specific profile assembled out of unambiguous and objective features which, taken together, answer the question ‘who he is?’”

live in. Only metalinguistic analysis, Bakhtin argues, can recognize that in Devushkin's internal dialogue with himself about living in the kitchen, "two rejoinders of the most intense dialogue—a discourse and a counter-discourse," clash with one another.⁴²⁴ Only when the reader recognizes such "diverse varieties of *double-voiced discourse* and its influence on various aspects of the structure of speech," Bakhtin writes, can he or she find "in Dostoevsky's creative art extraordinarily rich material."⁴²⁵

B. The Value of Applying Bakhtin's Dialogic Approach for Interpreting Old Testament Discourses and Textual Characters.

While Old Testament narratives may not be of the same dialogic quality as Dostoevsky's novels, reading dialogically allows the reader to recognize that the Old Testament narratives do feature dialogic qualities, which offer valuable insights for interpreting Old Testament characters.⁴²⁶ Many Old Testament characters are allowed to express themselves on the boundary of other characters in *I-thou* relationship.⁴²⁷ The essence of many biblical characters, he writes, "lies not in traits that define" those characters or in some "typical essence" revealed in the plot of

⁴²⁴ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 209, points out that the "collision" of these two discourses, results in a "new utterance resulting from their fusion."

⁴²⁵ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 265.

⁴²⁶ Barbara Green, *Mikhail, Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship: An Introduction* (2000), for example, surveys the work of a number of biblical scholars who have utilized Bakhtin's dialogic concepts in their reading of Old Testament literature. In addition to her own dialogic interpretation of the character Saul, she offers brief surveys of how Bakhtin's concepts have been applied in Kenneth Craig's readings of Jonah and Esther, in Carol Newsom's readings of Isaiah and Lamentations, in Ilana Pardes' reading of Exodus, and in Robert Polzin's readings of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, and II Samuel. Roland Boer, ed., *Bakhtin and Genre Theory in Biblical Studies* (Semeia Studies 63; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 3, produced a collection of essays that show how Bakhtin's theory of genre can enhance our study of the bible. Bakhtin's work has mostly been discussed "under the banners" of literary approaches and postmodern approaches, Boer points out. However, this volume is intended to allow Bakhtin's theory of speech genres intersect and meet approaches that have "longer traditions within biblical studies," specifically Gunkel's theory of Form Criticism. In addition to the articles by McCracken and Mandolfo, which will also be mentioned, see the recent work of Andre LaCocque, *Esther Regina, A Bakhtinian Reading*, 4, in which he attempts to show that the book of Esther "presents undeniable signs of the carnival and that the carnivalesque spirit of its author is quite evident."

the narrative, but rather “in what happens *between* what we usually call characters.”⁴²⁸ Therefore, what is “true” to Dostoevsky’s characters, he argues, is also true to biblical characters. The essence of many Old Testament characters is “relational and occurs in the between.”⁴²⁹

There is a dialogic boundary that is created, for instance, between the angel of Yahweh and Gideon, McCracken explains. As Gideon is threshing wheat in a winepress, the angel of Yahweh appears to Gideon and addresses him as a carrier of his own truth by calling him “mighty warrior.” Gideon responds to the angel of Yahweh’s address with his own point of view, claiming that he is surely not “mighty,” but rather a man from the weakest in tribe of Manassah. He then expresses his point of view of the current situation in Israel as he complains that “Yahweh has cast us off.” The angel of Yahweh then repeats his point of view of Gideon addressing him again as “mighty” and adds the command, “Go in this might of yours and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian: I hereby commission you.”⁴³⁰

An “I-Thou relation” is created in the dialogue between the angel of Yahweh and Gideon, in their “responsive words,” McCracken writes. There is “no description from an omniscient narrator,” he points out.⁴³¹ Rather, the biblical narrator allows the reader to see how Yahweh is conscious of Gideon from his own point of view, and also how Gideon is conscious of himself and of Yahweh and his care for Israel. This biblical narrator also allows the character of Gideon

⁴²⁷ McCracken, “Character In The Boundary,” 30, plays off Bakhtin’s concept of “interindividual.”

⁴²⁸ McCracken, “Character In The Boundary,” 31, 36, explains that in these dialogic encounters, “we have characters existing on the boundary between themselves and another.”

⁴²⁹ McCracken, “Character In The Boundary,” 33.

⁴³⁰ As quoted from McCracken, “Character on the Boundary,” 31

⁴³¹ McCracken, “Character on the Boundary,” 31. Even the words that the angel of Yahweh speaks to describe Gideon “are less important” to understanding Gideon than the response from Gideon that such words “elicit.”

to remain open and evolving on the boundary of the reader.⁴³² While the angel's characterization of Gideon as a 'mighty warrior' seems to "fix his character authoritatively," it does not McCracken argues. "Gideon as 'mighty warrior' might be a divine desire, but the description," he explains, "will prove to be at best only partially true, modified by hesitation, fear, and personal vengeance."⁴³³

Barbara Green's dialogic reading of I Samuel 17:55–20:42 also shows the reader how Bakhtin's analysis of double-voiced discourse can help the reader interpret how a character is conscious of his or her self and others.⁴³⁴ In this study she examines Saul's usage of double-voiced discourse in order to show how he is conscious of himself and of others. Green examines the song that the women came out and sang to Saul in the streets after David had returned from killing Goliath, "Saul has slain his thousands and David his tens of thousands."⁴³⁵ While many "commentators" have interpreted the song as insulting to Saul, Green takes issue with making such a strong assumption. The song is "tactful and spacious in its generality," she writes, since

⁴³² McCracken, "Character In The Boundary," 32, writes that as the biblical narrator speak "with" his characters, he leaves the characters open, evolving, and in dialogue with other characters and with the reader as well. We only know "some things" about certain characters.

⁴³³ McCracken, "Character on the Boundary," 30.

⁴³⁴ Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship*, 160–63. In this survey of how Bakhtin has been appropriated by biblical scholars, Green acknowledges Robert Polzin as the one who "without a doubt" was the first and most committed of biblical scholars to assimilate Bakhtin's work for Old Testament studies. Polzin, for example, examined the dialogic relationships of Moses' speech discourses to the discourses that he incorporates in his speech, already spoken by God, himself, and even the quotes of hypothetical conversations. The biblical narrator's arrangement of the speech discourses has a "braided effect," he suggests, which seems to enhance Moses' authority as the "single witness" and the "solo communicator of the vast majority of words God spoke at Horeb" by making it "impossible to distinguish between the speech of YHWH and the speech of Moses." The biblical narrator, thus, blurs the boundaries between the two characters' speech discourses, Polzin argues, in order to show that as he invests more authority in Moses, the more authority he, as biblical narrator, "will take for himself." See also Robert Polzin, *Moses and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomistic History* (New York: Seabury, 1980), 25.

⁴³⁵ See I Samuel 18:7. See also Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship*, 82. "The song unfolds rather classically according to parallelism's patterns," she writes, with the following structure, "verb (has slain), subject (Saul), object (number or unit killed); no verb (original carried over) subject (David) object (number killed).

“neither king nor boy slew hundreds or myriads.” Rather, only David slew one – Goliath. Thus, the song may have been intended to praise both Saul and David instead of intending to insult Saul.⁴³⁶

The key point, for Green however, is how Saul “rewrites the song” setting his version in “parodic dialogue” with the song of the women. Saul displaces himself as the subject of the verb “has slain,” she points out, and places himself second to David. He also makes “the singing key – ‘they gave.’” In so doing, he “subordinates” the actual event to the singing of it, Green writes, “spinning the women’s spin.”⁴³⁷

Bakhtin’s insights to reading for the dialogues are important here, Green claims, not because I Samuel is polyphonic in the Dostoevskian sense, but because reading dialogically instructs us “to listen attentively for the ways in which one speaker makes use of the language of another.”⁴³⁸ Saul’s parody of the women’s song “reverses their likely or at least plausible intent as he scrambles their recital,” she points out. And from his parodic version of the song, Saul draws the conclusion that David is now after his kingdom. Saul’s rewriting of the women’s song shows that he blames the women and the other subject, David, even though he has “removed their words from their control.” The utterance that Saul dreads “is his own, though he credits it to others.”⁴³⁹

Furthermore, there is no indication that Saul’s version of the song is shared with anyone else. “His construction” of the song, as “hateful to him as it is,” Green argues, begins to shape his

⁴³⁶ See Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship*, 82–83n20 for her discussion on those who have interpreted the intent of this song as an insult toward Saul.

⁴³⁷ Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship*, 83.

⁴³⁸ Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship*, 72.

⁴³⁹ Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship*, 83.

reality “not out in the open,” but rather “from inside his own head, cut off from the communication of others.” From this point on, she writes, “it becomes more difficult” for Saul to speak to others and for others to speak to him.⁴⁴⁰ Reading for the dialogues of Saul’s speech in this case helps the reader to be able to sense that Saul is frantically dependent on the word spoken about him in another’s mouth, yet he begins to slide into his own “isolation.”⁴⁴¹

McCracken, Green, and others have shown that when the reader recognizes and examines the dialogic qualities of Old Testament discourse, he or she is able to interpret many of the biblical characters as more than just fixed images of plot, personality traits, or deconstructed ideologies. The reader is able to see that biblical narrator often allows biblical characters to remain unfinalized and evolving consciousnesses in dialogue with and on the boundary of other characters and other already spoken discourses. The reader is also able to better understand how the biblical narrator and the characters are conscious of themselves and of others, and recognize that he or she is invited to be a “fully valid voice” with his or her point of view in dialogue with and on the boundary of the characters and the biblical narrator.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship*, 73–74. This is Green’s main thesis. She writes, “I have come to see and plan to sketch Saul . . . in frantic dependence on others, sliding inexorably into isolation. Saul spends himself and splits himself on this apparently obdurate and disapproving rock of God-with-David. . . Interpenetrated with others in a variety of ways he does not acknowledge, he is not well-centered in himself.”

CHAPTER THREE

FROM MONOLOGIC DEATH TO DIALOGIC LIFE: A STUDY OF THE DIALOGIC RELATIONSHIPS IN THE ELIJAH NARRATIVES

I. Introduction

A. Flattening Elijah to Functions of Plot, Polemics, and Ideology

The character Elijah, as depicted in the biblical narratives beginning in 1 Kings 17, is one of the most memorable characters in the Bible. While he performs incredible miracles like stopping it from raining in Israel for years and raising a widow's son from the dead, it is the intense dialogues that he participates in with characters, such as Yahweh and the widow of Zarephath, which reveal the complexities of his personality and allow the biblical reader to experience him in a most real way. In other words, Elijah's character is not defined merely by what he does or by what others say about him. His character is not governed by the plot nor is it finalized as a fixed image by the biblical narrator's point of view. Rather, Elijah is allowed to develop and evolve as a complex character at a distance from the biblical narrator's control, as he expresses his own point of view in dialogue other points of views.⁴⁴²

However, instead of studying Elijah as a character who develops by expressing his own point of view in relationship to other characters and their points of views, biblical scholars from a variety of different interpretational approaches have interpreted Elijah in a way that subordinates the study of his character to a study of plot, polemics, or ideology. It may be argued that the works of these scholars have not intended to interpret character, thus, it is unfair to question how they interpret Elijah's character. Yet, this is precisely Baruch Hochman's point

⁴⁴² See Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 9, write, "According to Bakhtin," Dostoevsky created characters that were "governed neither by plot (as in the epic) nor by an impersonal authorial idea (as in monologic works.)" Instead, his heroes carried their own ideas, which develop "at a distance from the author."

when he said back in 1985 that the study of literary characters in general has “not fared well.”⁴⁴³ By prioritizing aspects such as plot, polemics, and ideology, the study of character has been lacking in narrative-critical interpretation. This remains true for the study of the biblical character Elijah. It has “not fared well.” Elijah’s character has been oversimplified and flattened as a miracle worker who creates life or puts to death in order to carry out a plot motif of the narrative, or in order to serve the polemical intent or ideology of the historical author.

Leah Bronner, for example, flattens the complexity of Elijah’s character into an instrument of the polemical intent of the historical author in her book, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha As Polemics Against Baal Worship* (1968). Bronner’s work responds to many historical-critical scholars who questioned the historical validity of Elijah’s character as portrayed by these narratives, and who, consequently, explained these narratives away as loosely collected and embellished legends.⁴⁴⁴ Bronner argues that these narratives were not the works of “simple people,” but rather the work of a “well informed author” who was intent on “protesting” the belief in the Canaanite gods. When the Elijah narratives are read in light of the Ugaritic texts found at Ras Shamra, she asserts, they can be seen as “deliberate polemics against Canaanite mythology.”⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴³ Hochman, *Character In Literature*, 7. Hochman, *Character In Literature*, 13, also began, “Character has not fared well in our century,” in his 1985 survey of character.

⁴⁴⁴ Leah Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha as Polemics against Baal Worship* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968), ix, writes, “There was a tendency either to rationalize the marvelous” in these stories, or “to state that they were legends added to the original kernel of historical fact contained in these series. The reason for these embellishments was usually explained as a means of adding prestige to these prophets, and magnifying them in the eyes of their contemporaries, and of later generations.”

⁴⁴⁵ Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha*, 139–40, writes that these stories “are not the work of simple people, but by a well informed author who was intimately acquainted with Canaanite mythology and protested against it by showing that all powers in heaven and earth are under control of Israel’s God.”

Bronner identifies a number of polemical motifs that the historical author used to “undermine” belief in the Canaanite god Baal, which lead her to interpret the characters of these narratives as mere polemical figures. Perhaps the most powerful of these polemics was the “life” motif, since Baal was worshipped by the Canaanites as the god of “life.”⁴⁴⁶ Yahweh, for instance, is shown to be the God of “life” in the Elijah narratives, because he according to Bronner, not Baal, exhibits the power to revive the dead and show power over “death.”⁴⁴⁷

Likewise, Elijah’s character also serves this polemical function.⁴⁴⁸ All of the miracles that he performs, Bronner argues, show that Elijah’s actions “were designed to undermine the belief prevalent in Canaanite circles that Baal was the dispenser of all blessings.”⁴⁴⁹ Elijah’s raising of the widow’s son from the dead, for instance, should be read in light of the Canaanite belief “that prevailed in Ugarit,” she wrote, “that Baal who died and resurrected could resuscitate.” Elijah’s “act of resurrection” showed that he is Yahweh’s “instrument for giving or taking life.”⁴⁵⁰

Bronner’s work on the Elijah narratives offers the reader fascinating information regarding the historical Canaanite religion and mythology, and her theory regarding the polemical intent of

⁴⁴⁶ Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha*, 37. The myths of ancient Ugarit, Bronner writes, “try to give an explanation” for such things as droughts or famines as mentioned in 1 Kings 17. The claim, for instance, “that when Baal was dead aridity and sterility reigned in the land, because Mot the god of these forces ruled in the land.” When Baal, the god of rain and vegetation “was revived, then fertility and fecundity returned to the earth.” See also pages 86–122. In chapter six, Bronner specifically shows how the “life vs. death” motifs are prevalent in these narratives.

⁴⁴⁷ Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha*, 140. It was the aim of the author, she asserted, to protest against this Canaanite mythology by “showing that all powers in heaven and earth are under control of Israel’s God.”

⁴⁴⁸ Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha*, 21. Elijah’s name, Bronner pointed out, contains “the root letters El,” the name of a Canaanite god, but his character, she asserted, does not “polemicise against the Canaanite El,” but against Baal.

⁴⁴⁹ Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha*, 140. The miracles discharged by Elijah, such as “increasing the oil and meal, with-holding or releasing the forces of rain, restoring the dead to life, ascending heaven,” she posited, “were designed to undermine the belief prevalent in Canaanite circles that Baal was the dispenser of all these blessings.” See also Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha*, 119. When Elijah calls Yahweh to bring life back to a breathless boy of the widow of Zarephath, for instance, Bronner argues that biblical author intended to demonstrate “that the God of Israel controls life and death” even among people who worship the Canaanite gods.

the historical author has plausible textual support. However, she oversimplifies Elijah's character to a simple tool of the historical author's polemical intent against the Canaanite god Baal. She assumes that reading Ancient Near Eastern literature is the key for the reader in understanding these narratives, but also for interpreting the characters such as Elijah. Even in 1 Kings 17, where Baal is not mentioned, Bronner interprets Elijah's actions as directed against Baal.⁴⁵¹ Thus, in her attempt to show that Elijah serves as this polemical figure against Baal, she fails to adequately consider how Elijah's character evolves and develops throughout these narratives in relationship to other characters. Her study also fails to show how the other characters, even Yahweh, develop in relationship to Elijah.

Bronner's interpretation of Elijah influenced Gregory Hauser's work, "Yahweh Versus Death," which appears in a book titled, *From Carmel to Horeb: Elijah in Crisis* (1990). He, too, assumes that the author of 1 Kings 17–19 wrote these narratives as an "anti-Baalistic" polemic.⁴⁵² He, like Bronner, offers the reader interesting and plausible points regarding the possible plot structure and polemic motifs intended by the historical author(s). However, although Elijah is the main character in Chapter 17 who appears in every scene, and although the name of the book speaks of "Elijah in Crisis," Hauser offers little explanation of how Elijah's actions and words

⁴⁵⁰ Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha*, 120.

⁴⁵¹ Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha*, 119–20. "The writer of the stories of Elijah and Elisha," Bronner writes, "was well acquainted with the belief that prevailed in Ugarit that Baal who died and resurrected could resuscitate. With his stories he demonstrates that the God of Israel controls life and death." After recounting how Elijah's action of resurrecting the widow's son, she simply writes that Elijah is "God's instrument for giving and taking life."

⁴⁵² Alan J. Hauser and Russell Gregory, "Yahweh versus Death" in *From Carmel to Horeb: Elijah in Crisis*. (England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 11. Hauser and Gregory, "Yahweh versus Death", 84n2, directs the reader to Bronner's work for further discussion of this anti-Baalistic polemic. He begins his work by stating, "That the stories in 1 Kings 17–19 are anti-Baalistic is self-evident." He continues, "It is not surprising that the motif of Yahweh's struggle with death would play so important role in 1 Kings 17–19. They cycle of Baal's periodic submission to Mot (death) and the consequent presence of drought and sterility throughout the land, which was followed by Anat's defeat of Mot, the resuscitation of Baal, and the return of fertility to the land, was a crucial (continued next page)

reveal his character to be “in crisis.” His exclusive focus on Yahweh’s character serving as a polemic “versus death,” flattens Elijah’s character and oversimplifies what it means for Elijah to be “in crisis”—the title of this book. Elijah’s actions and even his words are interpreted by Hauser only to show how Yahweh defeats “death.”

Hauser, for instance, points to the importance of the repetition and placement of the words, “Yahweh lives,” and what he sees to be a variant of this phrase in 1 Kings 17. Although Elijah and the widow speak these words, however, he does not offer much analysis as to how their words help the reader to interpret their characters. Instead, he simply claims that their words help reiterate Yahweh’s “unchallengeable power in the realm of two Canaanite gods—Baal and Mot.”⁴⁵³

When Elijah utters this oath to Ahab in 17:1, Hauser does not explain how Elijah’s oath to Ahab speaks to Elijah’s character in relationship to Ahab and Yahweh, nor does he show how Elijah’s oath shows him to be “in crisis.” Rather, he only explains what these words mean for Yahweh’s character – that Yahweh “and not Baal, is the true God of Israel.”⁴⁵⁴ When the widow speaks these same words to Elijah in 17:12, Hauser does not explain what the widow’s oath says about her character in relationship to Elijah, nor about how her words present Elijah “in crisis.”

element in Canaanite religion.” See Hauser’s complete analysis of I Kings 17 in pages 12–22.

⁴⁵³ Hauser, “Yahweh versus Death,” 11–12. Influenced by Bronner’s work, Hauser sees these narratives as polemical discourses that depict Yahweh as true God instead of Baal, the Canaanite god of life, and also instead of Mot, the Canaanite god of “death.” Hauser writes, “the writer allows death to pose numerous challenges to Yahweh’s power, almost as if death were a personified force, like the Canaanite god of death, Mot. . . . It could therefore be said that in 1 Kings 17–19 Yahweh asserts his unchallengeable power in the realm of two Canaanite gods—Baal and Mot.”

⁴⁵⁴ Hauser, “Yahweh versus Death,” 13.

He simply asserts that they have a sarcastic twist to them showing that the widow has no confidence in “Yahweh’s power to sustain life.”⁴⁵⁵

Finally, Hauser does not explain what it means for Elijah to be “in crisis” when the widow’s son dies in the last scene of chapter 17. The widow accuses Elijah of killing her son in 17:18, and then Elijah accuses Yahweh of killing the widow’s son in 17:20, but Hauser does not explain what these accusations say about Elijah and his relationships to the widow and to Yahweh. Rather, when Elijah hands the widow’s once- dead son back to her alive and says, “Look, your son lives,” Hauser simply asserts that Elijah’s words echo the oath, “Yahweh lives,” which he and the widow had spoken earlier, and that Elijah’s words to the widow here show that the “writer again emphasizes Yahweh’s power as a God of life.”⁴⁵⁶

The intense dialogues that take place among Elijah, Yahweh, and the widow in this chapter reveal Elijah to be quite a complex character. Hauser’s interpretation of these dialogues, however, speak more to Yahweh’s struggle against “death” than explain what these words say about Elijah and the widow—the characters who speak them. Thus, Elijah is not just flattened to a mere polemical function against the Canaanite gods in Hauser’s work; he is subordinated to Yahweh as the main character in a “life versus death” polemic.

Phyllis Tribble, in her article *Exegesis for Storytellers and Other Strangers*, offers a much different interpretation of Elijah than Bronner and Hauser, because as Tribble admits, she is not

⁴⁵⁵ Hauser, “Yahweh versus Death,” 17.

⁴⁵⁶ See also Hauser, “Yahweh versus Death,” 20, where he points to the third “variant” of this phrase in 1 Kings 17:23. Elijah returns the once dead boy to his mother by saying, “Look, your son lives.” Hauser offers no explanation on what these words say about Elijah or the widow’s character, but rather argues they are similar to the oath, “Yahweh lives!” and therefore speaking to Yahweh’s power of life over death.

attempting to interpret the intent of the author.⁴⁵⁷ Her feminist deconstructionist reading also flattens and oversimplifies Elijah's character. She, too, identifies a "life" verses "death" polemic in these narratives like Bronner and Hauser, but the force of this polemic, for her, is directed against the "female and foreign" Jezebel, not the Canaanite gods.⁴⁵⁸

The Baalistic world in which Jezebel and Ahab live signifies "death," she writes, but "the Yhwistic world in which Elijah resides signifies life."⁴⁵⁹ The Sidonian widow, for example, perceives Elijah as "an agent of death" when her son dies, but she eventually "affirms Elijah and his god" when Elijah restores the boy back to life. The Sidonian widow's obedience to Elijah's commands, her confession that he is a "man of God," and her acknowledgement that the "word of Yahweh" from his mouth is "true," are for Tribble, part of the "deconstructive strategy" of "Israelite storytellers" to use "Jezebel's own people to undermine her and exalt Elijah."⁴⁶⁰

"Those who deconstruct," however, "find themselves deconstructed," Tribble writes.⁴⁶¹

Elijah, from her feminist point of view, cannot merely be flattened as a function of the plot or

⁴⁵⁷ Phyllis Tribble, "Exegesis for Storytellers and Other Strangers," *JBL* 114 (1995): 3, begins her article, "If the Society of Biblical Literature gave awards for excellence" in such "polarized thinking, the Deuteronomistic theologians would capture first prize." She then asserts that ancient authors arranged these narratives so that Elijah should be interpreted as the "epitome of good," while Jezebel his opposite "evil." Tribble understands these narratives written by a school of authors, which she labels the "Deuteronomists" based on Martin Noth's theory of a particular Deuteronomistic history and theology. Her reading of the Elijah narratives, she writes, intends to "confound" authorial intention "for the sake of spicing theological discussion."

⁴⁵⁸ Tribble, "Exegesis for Storytellers and Other Strangers," 4–6. Here Tribble shows her feminist point of view in her reading by contrasting Jezebel as "female and foreign" with Elijah who is "male and native." For Tribble, Jezebel is "entrapped by hostile editors and male lords" neither able to speak or act. She is merely a "pawn" taken to Elijah's land in a political marriage, according to Tribble, while Elijah is "the promoter of a religious conflict" taking himself to Jezebel's land. Elijah's "turf" rejects Jezebel with hostility, but her "turf receives him with hospitality." Elijah denies "her god power in her land while readily exercising the power of his god in her land."

⁴⁵⁹ Tribble, "Exegesis for Storytellers and Other Strangers," 5. See also her comments on page 3: Deuteronomistic theologians, Tribble writes, "subsumed centuries of traditions, diverse genres, and points of view under the severe rubric of opposing concepts" such as "life and death."

⁴⁶⁰ Tribble, "Exegesis for Storytellers and Other Strangers," 5–6.

⁴⁶¹ Tribble, "Exegesis for Storytellers and Other Strangers," 6.

polemics designed by the historical author(s). Rather, he is a character who needs to be deconstructed of his chauvinistic and religiously intolerant ideology. Unlike Jezebel, who is “entrapped by hostile editors and male lords, Elijah is “free from editorial restraints,” she points out. He is able, therefore, to exalt “himself in word and deed,” and become the “promoter of a religious conflict.” For Tribble, Elijah’s character in relationship to Jezebel shows how “tyranny counters tolerance; and ideology destroys civility.”⁴⁶²

Tribble’s deconstructive reading of Elijah comes to a climax as she turns what she sees to be the authorial intent of the “life” and “death” polemic upside down in chapter 18. Elijah’s slaughtering of the Baal prophets in chapter 18, for her, certainly does not depict Elijah as an image of “life,” but rather shows that he “emulates” and even “exceeds” Jezebel as an agent of “death.”⁴⁶³ In a pro-Jezebel world, “Elijah would be censured for murdering prophets,” she asserts. In “life and death,” Elijah and Jezebel are “not divided,” but both use power to “promote their gods, scheme, and murder.”⁴⁶⁴

Tribble’s interpretation of Elijah may fulfill her intent to “spice up theological discussions,” but her deconstruction of the author’s “intentionality” and of Elijah’s character has its problems. The biblical narrator’s reports of Elijah’s obedient response to Yahweh’s commands in 17:5 and 17:10, for example, conflicts with Tribble’s claim that he is some egotist elevating himself to “equal authority” of Yahweh. Her labeling Jezebel as “tolerant,” as opposed to Elijah’s

⁴⁶² Tribble, “Exegesis for Storytellers and Other Strangers,” 5–6. Deconstructing Elijah shows how “Tyranny counters tolerance; ideology destroys civility,” Tribble writes.

⁴⁶³ Tribble, “Exegesis for Storytellers and Other Strangers,” 8.

⁴⁶⁴ Tribble, “Exegesis for Storytellers and Other Strangers,” 17. See also her comments on p. 18. “A reversal of the context in which their stories appear,” Tribble writes, “illuminates the bond between them. In a pro-Jezebel setting Elijah would be censured for murdering prophets, for imposing his theology on the kingdom, for inciting kings to do his bidding, and for stirring up trouble.”

“intolerance” also makes little sense in light of her acknowledgement that Jezebel killed the prophets of Yahweh and also used her power to “scheme” and “murder.”⁴⁶⁵

Furthermore, the fact that Elijah never directly speaks to Jezebel or about Jezebel in these narratives, let alone mentions her gender or race, argues against Tribble’s implication that the “Israelite storytellers” were intending to direct these narratives and Elijah’s character against her because she was “female and foreign.” Deconstructing Elijah as a figure of “intolerance,” “incivility,” and ultimately an agent of murderous “death,” as Tribble does, fails to “interpret” the complexities of Elijah’s character.⁴⁶⁶ In fact, Tribble’s “interpretation” of Elijah fails to interpret Elijah’s character as depicted by the text, and rather creates an Elijah that is only *based* on the text.⁴⁶⁷

Mikhail Bakhtin’s dialogic approach enables the reader to construct Elijah as a character in a totally different way than Bronner, Hauser, and Tribble’s approaches. His dialogic approach does not lead the reader to assert authorial control over Elijah’s character where it is not exerted, as Bronner and Hauser’s approaches do, and assume that Elijah’s character simply serves a certain polemical function intended by the historical author. His approach also does not lead the reader to deconstruct Elijah simply as an instrument of ideology, as Tribble’s feminist approach does, and so interpret Elijah in a way that silences the voices in the text. Rather, Bakhtin’s

⁴⁶⁵ Tribble, “Exegesis for Storytellers and Other Strangers,” 8. “Though murderous Jezebel may not be all powerful,” Tribble writes, Elijah and the other prophets of YHWH can take no chances. She cuts them down.”

⁴⁶⁶ Tribble, “Exegesis for Storytellers and Other Strangers,” 5, 17–18.

⁴⁶⁷ Bronner and Hauser both help the reader to discern the possible aim of the author of these narratives, because they do intend to honor the intent of the author. Tribble’s reading, however, creates a new narrative derived from the author’s original intent much like the story “Wicked” creates a new narrative derived from the original “Wizard of Oz.” It is incorrect, then, to say that “Wicked” is an interpretation of “The Wizard of Oz,” when it, like Tribble, “confounds” the authorial intent of the “Wizard of Oz.”

dialogic approach enables the reader to interpret Elijah as the complex character he is depicted to be in the narrative text.

Bakhtin's dialogic approach, like these other approaches, allows the reader to recognize how "life" overcomes "death" within the Elijah narratives. His dialogic approach, however, does not recognize "life" overcoming "death" simply as a plot or polemical motif. Instead, his dialogic approach offers a reading strategy that pays special attention to the metalinguistic phenomena, or the dialogic relationships that exist among the biblical narrator, the characters, their discourses, and the reader. In so doing, the reader will recognize how the biblical narrator of the Elijah narratives brings "life" to his characters and to his dialogue with the reader by changing his speech expression from a monologic discourse style to a more dialogic discourse style.

Since Elijah is allowed to express his own point of view in dialogue with other characters, the dialogic reader is able to see how Elijah is a complex character who develops and evolves on the boundary of these other characters, and how these other characters develop and evolve on the boundary of Elijah.⁴⁶⁸ As Elijah and these other characters are allowed to express themselves on the boundary of each other with their own points of views, they are simultaneously allowed to remain on the boundary of the reader. As a result, the dialogic reader can recognize that he or she is not just reading an ancient story, but rather that he or she is a participant in great dialogue among the biblical author or narrator and these characters.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁸ These characters cannot be reduced to adjectives, to a list of traits, or ideologies, but rather they are revealed by how they express themselves for others and in relationship to others.

⁴⁶⁹ I am reading with a narrative-critical approach, which reads synchronically not diachronically. Therefore, I will read with the assumption that the Elijah narratives are one narrative and have one biblical narrator. I also will not distinguish the biblical narrator from the historical biblical author because, first of all, from a narrative-critical perspective, I do not think the biblical author has written in a way that intends to intentionally refract his point of view through a biblical narrator as Dostoevsky often did. Second, from a historical-critical perspective, while I do acknowledge the possibility of minor redactions to the book of I Kings, I believe that in general it is the work of a single historical author. For an overview of such a view of the authorship see Donald J. Wiseman, *I & II Kings—An* (continued next page)

B. Recognizing How “Life” Overcomes “Death” in the Elijah Narratives with a Dialogic Approach

The Elijah narratives, according to Thomas Brodie, do not begin with the appearance of Elijah in 1 Kings 17, but rather with the introduction of King Ahab in 1 Kings 16:29–34.⁴⁷⁰ Whether one agrees with Brodie or not concerning the actual beginning of the Elijah narratives, the biblical narrator’s reports concerning Ahab and the other Israelite kings provide important context to the Elijah narratives and are important for interpreting the characters of the Elijah narratives. Moreover, studying the dialogic relationships of this greater context is especially important for those who wish to study the characters of the Elijah narratives, because doing so enables the reader to see how the biblical narrator moves from finalizing his characters as fixed images to allowing his characters to evolve and change as they speak their own points of view to others. In other words, the dialogic reader will recognize how “life” overcomes “death” in these narratives dialogically as the biblical narrator switches from using a monologic discourse style to a dialogic discourse style in depicting his characters.

The dialogic reader will be able to recognize how the biblical narrator first kills the dialogue and the dialogic relationships among himself, his characters, and the reader in the six

Introduction and Commentary (TOTC; London: IVP, 1993), 53–55.

I, therefore, do not agree with assumption held by many source, form, and redactionary critics that understand the Elijah narratives to be a mere collection of folklorish miracle stories woven together by a final author, and or final redactionist. For a good overview of how such approaches understand the Elijah narratives see the following works: Simon John Devries, *I Kings* (WBC; Waco: Word Books, 1985); Simon John Devries, *Prophet Against Prophet* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmanns, 1978); Burke O. Long, *I Kings with an Introduction To Historical Literature* (FOTL; Grand Rapids: Eerdmanns, 1984).

⁴⁷⁰ Thomas L. Brodie, *The Crucial Bridge: The Elijah-Elisha Narrative as an Interpretive Synthesis of Genesis–Kings and a Literary Model for the Gospels* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 1. The Elijah narratives begin, Brodie writes, “not with the appearance of Elijah (I Kings 17) but with the preceding description of a great crisis – the introduction of the evil Ahab and Jezebel (I Kings 16:29–34).” Hauser, “Yahweh versus Death,” 12, also writes, “While structurally not part of the tightly-knit three chapter unit, 1 Kings 16:29–33 lays the groundwork for chapters 17–19 by tersely listing Ahab’s sins.” Tribble “Exegesis for Storytellers and Other Strangers,” 4, also points to the importance of the report of Ahab and Jezebel in 1 Kings 16.

regnal reports that precede the introduction of Elijah in 1 Kings 17:1.⁴⁷¹ Readers that desire to flatten or finalize textual characters as fixed images or functions of plot, polemics, or ideology will do so with ease when reading these regnal reports because the biblical narrator, himself, shows his desire to do so with his monologic discourse. Beginning with King Nadab in 1 Kings 15:26, the biblical narrator's monologic discourse subjects his characters to what Bakhtin called an "organic death" because, for the most part, they are not allowed to express their own points of views in dialogue with other characters and their points of views.⁴⁷² The biblical narrator's monologic discourse about his characters also kills the dialogue and the relationship that the biblical narrator has with the reader, as he expects the reader to simply agree with his authorial perspective about the characters as if it is the only true perspective of the narrative world.

The dialogic reader will be able to recognize how the biblical narrator then brings life to his characters and the dialogue as he changes his discourse style to be more dialogic towards the characters and towards his readers beginning. This change to a more dialogic discourse takes place as the biblical narrator brings Elijah into the narrative at the beginning of 1 Kings 17. The biblical narrator allows Elijah to express himself on the boundary of other characters, and as Elijah does so, his character shapes and is shaped by the dialogic relationships he has to the other characters. Moreover, as the biblical narrator allows dialogue to take place among Elijah and the other characters, the chief hero of dialogue, double-voiced discourse, will be revealed in the speech expression of both the biblical narrator and his characters. Studying the double-voiced

⁴⁷¹ The six regnal reports begin in 15:25 with Nadab and then continue with Baasha (15:33), Elah (16:8), Zimri (16:15), Omri (16:21), and Ahab (16:29).

⁴⁷² Bakhtin, *Toward a Reworking*, 300. "The only characters who organically die," Bakhtin writes, "are the objectified personages, the ones who do not take part in the great dialogue (the ones who merely serve as the material or the paradigm for dialogue)."

nature of these discourses allows the reader to see that even their discourses are permeated with dialogic relationships.

Finally, as the biblical narrator's discourse becomes increasingly dialogic, the dialogic reader recognizes that he or she is invited by the biblical narrator to be more than just an observer. The reader is invited to participate in dialogue with the biblical narrator and the characters from his or her own point of view. The biblical narrator invites the reader into dialogue by creating zones of contact, which restrains his authorial surplus and allows Elijah, as well as other characters such as the widow of Zarephath, to remain unfinalized and evolving on the boundary of other characters, but also on the boundary of the reader.

II. 1 Kings 15:25–1 Kings 16:34: From Monologic Death

A. Introduction: Reading for the Dialogues of the Biblical Narrator's Monologic Discourse Concerning the Israelite Kings

The report about Ahab is the last of a sequence of six consecutive reports from the biblical narrator's perspective concerning the Israelite kings that corresponded to Asa's reign of Judah.⁴⁷³ The dialogic reader will recognize that the biblical narrator expresses his point of view about each of these six Israelite kings and their relationship to Yahweh predominately from his monologic perspective. These kings are not allowed to speak as carriers of their own truths or point of views in dialogue with other characters. Instead, the biblical narrator deadens their characters by finalizing them as fixed images of "evil in the eyes of Yahweh" because they "walked in the sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat."⁴⁷⁴ By silencing the voice of the characters, the

⁴⁷³ The first of these reports begins in I Kings 15:25 with "Nadab son of Jeroboam," and then continues with "Baasha son of Ahijah" (15:33), "Elah son of Baasha" (16:8), "Zimri" (16:15), "Omri" (16:23), and "Ahab, son of Omri" (16:29). See Wiseman, *I and II Kings: An Introduction and Commentary*, 157. With the report of Nadab, the history "reverts to the kings of Israel who were contemporaries of Asa," Wiseman points out.

⁴⁷⁴ Martin Noth is credited for outlining the "now widely accepted theory" of the "Deuteronomistic History" (*continued next page*)

biblical narrator's discourse in these regnal reports allows little dialogue among the reader, the characters, and the biblical narrator. Thus, the monologic aim of the biblical narrator is not just to finalize the kings as "evil" in the eyes of Yahweh, but also in the eyes of the reader.

The reader will also recognize that the report concerning Ahab is not just the last of six consecutive reports, but rather a report that sets Ahab apart from the five preceding kings as the ultimate finalized and fixed image of "evil" in the eyes of Yahweh. The deadening effect of biblical narrator's monologic discourse is increased upon Ahab's consciousness as his deeds are compared as "more evil" than all the kings before him. The biblical narrator sets Ahab apart also by not just reporting *that* Ahab walked in the sins of Jeroboam, but itemizing *how* exactly Ahab walked in those sins. It is this killing of Ahab's character that provides important context to the Elijah narratives and prepares the dialogic reader to interpret Elijah's character beginning with his words spoken to Ahab in 17:1.

B. Deadening the First Five Israelite Kings with Monologic Force

While scholars have generalized the entire regnal reports of each king either as part of an "introductory formula" or a "concluding formula," the dialogic reader can identify a specific introductory speech genre and a specific concluding speech genre that the biblical narrator uses to mark the boundaries of each regnal report.⁴⁷⁵ Each regnal report begins with an introductory

or "theology." See the overview of Noth's theory in DeVries, *I Kings*, xxxiii–xxxv. Tribble, like many readers who have assimilated historical-critical research of the sources of the Old Testament, assumes that the report concerning Ahab, and much of the negative discourse about Ahab and Jezebel is the writing of "Deuteronomistic theologians." She also points her readers to an overview of what is considered to be Deuteronomistic theology and history in Steven L. McKenzie, "Deuteronomistic History," AB 2:160–68 and the bibliography cited there.

⁴⁷⁵ DeVries, *I Kings*, xlvi, structures the entire report for each king under either an "introductory formula" or "concluding formula." Although the Northern and Southern notices "differ in some significant details," DeVries understands the overall structure of the introductions and conclusions of these reports as follows:

- A. Introductory Formula
 1. Date when reign commenced and length of reign

(continued next page)

speech genre containing a verbal clause that includes the naming of the king and the qal perfect verb מָלַךְ, “he reigned.” This verbal clause indicates how long each king reigned over Israel, and often times, from which city the king reigned.⁴⁷⁶ It is also connected to a temporal clause beginning with the phrase “in the year,” (בְּשָׁנָת) which tells when the particular king came to reign in Israel in correspondence to the reign of Asa, king of Judah.⁴⁷⁷

The biblical narrator also marks the end of a regnal report with a particular concluding speech genre. He concludes the regnal reports by directing the reader to the “the remainder of the deeds” (וַיִּתֶּר דְּבָרָיו) of each king that are “written in the book of the deeds of the days of the Kings of Israel” (עַל־סֵפֶר דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים לְמַלְכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל).⁴⁷⁸ In the reports for Baasha and

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- 2. Place of reign
 - 3. Theological assessment
 - B. Concluding Formula
 - 1. Mention of most notable deeds
 - 2. Reference to further sources
 - 3. Notice of death and burial

⁴⁷⁶ The introduction of Baasha in 16:33, for example, indicates he “reigned” over Israel from the city of Tirzah.

⁴⁷⁷ The biblical narrator uses this introductory speech genre first for Rehoboam, son of Solomon in 14:21. See also, for example, I Kings 15:25 concerning the introduction of Nadab:

וַנָּדָב בֶן־יֶרֶבֹעַם מָלַךְ עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשָׁנַת שְׁתַּיִם לְאַסָּא מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה וַיִּמְלֹךְ עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁנַת־יָמִים:

(and Nadab, son of Jeroboam, reigned over Israel in the second year of Asa, king of Judah. And he reigned over Israel for two years.

⁴⁷⁸ He uses the concluding speech genre first for Solomon, son of David in 11:41–43. See also, for example, 1 Kings 15:31 the concluding report concerning Nadab:

וַיִּתֶּר דְּבָרָיו נָדָב וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה הִלְאֵתָם כְּתוּבִים עַל־סֵפֶר דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים לְמַלְכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

(and the remainder of the deeds of Nadab and all which he did, are they not written in the book of the deeds of the days of the kings of Israel.)” This last phrase is often translated as “the book of the annals of the kings of Israel.

Omri, the two kings who were not murdered by their successors, the biblical narrator adds that they “slept with their fathers,” and reports in which city they were buried.⁴⁷⁹

In between the introductory and concluding speech genres for each regnal report, the biblical narrator controls the narrative discourse predominately from his point of view in order to express the monologic aim of his discourse against these kings. He uses the waw consecutive imperfect third person singular verb form to move the reader’s attention from scene to scene with reports about the kings’ actions. These first five regnal reports are permeated with death and destruction as the biblical narrator details the kings’ acts of war and violence towards each other. The obvious aim of these reports is to depict the Israelite kings in a negative way since nothing positive is mentioned about any of the kings.

The biblical narrator, for instance, reports in I Kings 15:27 how Baasha “conspired” (וַיִּקְשֹׁר) against Nadab and how “he cut him down” (וַיִּכְהוּ) at Gibbeoth. He reports in 16:9–12 how Zimri “conspired” (וַיִּקְשֹׁר) against Elah, son of Baasha, and how “Zimri came and he cut him down and he killed him” (וַיָּבֵא זִמְרִי וַיִּכְהוּ וַיְמִיתֵהוּ), and how “Zimri destroyed the whole house of Baasha” (וַיִּשְׂמַד זִמְרִי אֶת כָּל-בֵּית בַּעֲשָׂא).

In 16:16 the biblical narrator allows a voice, other than his own, to be heard in the narrative as he reports that the troops encamped at Gibbethon heard it said that “Zimri has conspired and he has killed the king.” Yet, although the biblical narrator shows that these words are not his own, he does not allow them to be embodied by a particular person as an expression of someone’s point of view. The biblical narrator simply allows this other voice to be heard by the

⁴⁷⁹ See I Kings 16:6 concerning Baasha who “slept with his fathers and was buried in Tirzah”:

(continued next page)

reader and by the “Israelites in the camp” as a discourse that *represents* something that someone or some group of people from Gibbethon would have said. In other words, although these words *represent* what someone would have said, they are *single-voiced discourse*, because they are still expressed from the perspective of the biblical narrator.⁴⁸⁰

The biblical narrator then reports in 16:16 that the “Israelites in the camp” responded to Zimri’s conspiracy and murderous acts against King Elah by rejecting Zimri as the new king and making Omri the new king of Israel. Their response to this anonymous, un-embodied voice explicitly shows they favor Omri over Zimri as their king. The reader may wonder, however, if the Israelite’s favor for Omri is a result of their anger towards Zimri for killing Elah, or if they simply want Omri to be the next king?

Moreover, as the Israelites respond to this anonymous voice, which spoke of Zimri’s conspiracy and killing of King Elah, the reader is left to wonder if the Israelites heard or remembered Yahweh’s judgment against the house of Baasah spoken through Jehu in 16:1–4, or at least the biblical narrator’s report in 16:12 of this word had been fulfilled when Zimri killed Elah. The Israelites, like the reader, must have heard at least reports of what Jehu told Baasha, if not from Jehu’s mouth directly. Their response to Zimri, then, who carried out Yahweh’s judgment by killing Elah, shows the Israelites to be like the kings of Israel. The fact that they are moved to respond against Zimri because of an anonymous voice rather than accept Zimri because his actions fulfilled *Yahweh’s word* against the house of Baasha, as spoken by Jehu and

וַיִּשְׁכַּב בְּעֵשָׂא עִם־אֲבֹתָיו וַיִּקְבֹּר בְּתַרְצָה וַיִּמְלֹךְ אֵלָה בְּנוֹ תַחְתָּיו:

⁴⁸⁰ See Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 187. The second type of single-voiced discourse, according to Bakhtin is “objectified” or “represented” discourse of a character. The character’s discourse, Bakhtin explains, “is treated precisely as someone else’s discourse, as discourse belonging to some specific characterological profile or type . . . as an object of authorial understanding, and not from the point of view of its own referential intention.”

the biblical narrator, shows the Israelites to be deaf to Yahweh's voice and dead in their relationship to him.

The biblical narrator moves the narrative along with more reports of death and destruction by informing the reader in 16:17–18 how Omri “went up” (וַיַּעֲלֶה) and how he and his men “laid siege” (וַיִּצְרֶה) to the city of Tirzah. When Zimri (וַיְהִי כִּרְאוֹת זִמְרִי) saw Omri's siege of his city, Zimri “went” (וַיָּבֵא) into the king's palace “he burned” (וַיִּשְׂרֹף) it with fire and “he died” (וַיָּמָת). The biblical narrator then reports in 16:21–23 that Israel was divided into two camps under Omri and Tibni, but how the people “became strong” (וַיִּחַזְקוּ) for Omri, and that Tibni then “died” (וַיָּמָת). The biblical narrator concludes these reports by contrasting Zimri's destroying of the king's palace with Omri's building of an entire city. He reports in 16:24 how Omri “bought” (וַיִּקְנֶה) the hill country from Shemer, that “he built” (וַיִּבְנֶה) a city there and “he called the name of the city” (וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שֵׁם הָעִיר) Samaria.

While these negative reports of Israelite kings finalize their consciousnesses and deaden their characters, the monologic force of the biblical narrator's discourse is sensed even more so by how he theologically evaluates the kings in relationship to Yahweh's consciousness.⁴⁸¹ The biblical narrator addresses the reader with his authorial point of view concerning these kings with a variety of theological evaluation speech genres. He offers a first example of a theological evaluation against Nadab, son of Jeroboam in 1 Kings 15:26 by telling the reader that Nadab

⁴⁸¹ As noted above, DeVries includes the theological evaluations as a part of the “introductory formula.” This study distinguishes these evaluations from the opening naming of the king in order to show the particular dialogic relationships they have to other already spoken discourses, and to show the variety of speech genre types that the biblical narrator uses to speak these evaluations.

“did evil in the eyes of Yahweh and he walked in the way of his father and in his sins which caused Israel to sin.”⁴⁸²

וַיַּעַשׂ הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה וַיֵּלֶךְ בְּדַרְכֵי אָבִיו וּבַחַטָּאתוֹ אֲשֶׁר הִחַטִּיא אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל

The waw consecutive imperfect verbs in this theological evaluation do not report Nadab’s actions as in the reports mentioned above. Rather, they exert the biblical narrator’s monologic power to finalize Nadab as an image of “evil” in relationship to Yahweh because of his relationships to his father Jeroboam and to Israel. Nadab is “evil” in the eyes of Yahweh because he “walked in the way” of his father, and by doing so, he “caused Israel to sin.”⁴⁸³ The biblical narrator does not allow Nadab or Yahweh to speak as carriers of their own truth concerning Nadab’s deeds. Both characters are left lifeless and voiceless under the monologic control of the biblical narrator’s consciousness and discourse. Thus, the reader must interpret Nadab as “evil” not because Nadab or Yahweh has spoken, but because the biblical narrator has.

The biblical narrator re-accentuates this type of theological evaluation in a new way for Baasha in 15: 34 in order to also deaden his consciousnesses in relationship to Yahweh:

1 Kings 15:34 – Concerning Baasha

וַיַּעַשׂ הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה וַיֵּלֶךְ בְּדַרְכֵי יָרְבֹעָם וּבַחַטָּאתוֹ
אֲשֶׁר הִחַטִּיא אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל:

⁴⁸² The theological viewpoint that someone did “evil in the eyes of Yahweh” has been seen as a mark of the Deuteronomistic theologians. See DeVries, *I Kings*, xxxiv. A summary of Jeroboam’s sins are recorded in 12:31–33. Jeroboam built shrines on the high places and appointed priests from all backgrounds of people even though they were not Levites. He instituted his own festival and made sacrifices to golden calves in Bethel and Dan. As DeVries points out, it was because Nadab did not suppress the golden calves, that Nadab “did evil in the eyes of Yahweh and walked in the sins of his father. See DeVries, *I Kings*, 193.

⁴⁸³ Nadab “did evil in the eyes of Yahweh” because he “walked in the way” and “in the sins” of his father, Jeroboam, and by doing so he “caused Israel to sin.”

(And he did evil in the eyes of Yahweh and he walked in the way of Jeroboam and in his sin which he caused Israel to sin)

As if the first negative theological evaluation was not enough to finalize Nadab in relationship to Yahweh, his father, and Israel for the reader, the biblical narrator utters a second example of a theological evaluation that deadens Nadab's consciousness in relationship to Yahweh. This second theological evaluation, though, has a much different syntactical structure and context than the first. The biblical narrator first creates a context for this second theological evaluation in 15:27 by reporting how Baasha, son of Ahijah of the house of Issachar, "conspired" against Nadab, "killed" him and then destroyed all the house of Jeroboam *in fulfillment* of "the word of Yahweh which he spoke by the hand of his servant Ahijah, the Shilonite" (אַחִיָּה הַשִּׁילֹנִי) (רַבֵּר יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר בְּיַד-עַבְדּוֹ).⁴⁸⁴

The mentioning of the word "spoken by the hand of his servant Ahijah the Shilonite" allows the reader to overhear, or recall, the particular word of judgment that Yahweh spoke through Ahijah against Jeroboam in 1 Kings 14:10–11, 16. Although the biblical narrator does not quote or directly incorporate that particular word of Yahweh here, his discourse responds to that word with a sideward glance. In this case, the biblical narrator's sideward glance acknowledges the truth of Yahweh's prophetic word by connecting Baasha's actions against Nadab as fulfillment of that word spoken through Ahijah. The biblical narrator's glance at Yahweh's word also seems to imply that Nadab had no chance to escape Baasha's destroying

⁴⁸⁴ Wiseman, *I and II Kings: An Introduction and Commentary*, 158.; DeVries, *I Kings*, 193. As Wiseman and DeVries point out, the biblical narrator mentions that Baasha's father Ahijah is of the "house of Issachar" to distinguish him from the prophet Ahijah who is from Shilo.

and killing hand. Nadab was doomed from the start, it seems, because of Yahweh's already spoken word against his father, Jeroboam.

However, just as the reader may consider Nadab unjustly judged and punished because of his father's sins, the biblical narrator utters his second theological evaluation against Nadab. Baasha killed Nadab and destroyed the house of Jeroboam, the biblical narrator reports in 15:28–30, “because of the sins of Jeroboam which *he (Nadab) sinned* and which he caused Israel to sin because the anger of Yahweh the God of Israel which he provoked.”⁴⁸⁵

עַל־חַטָּאוֹת יִרְבְּעִם אֲשֶׁר חָטָא וְאֲשֶׁר הִחַטִּיא אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכַעֲסוֹ אֲשֶׁר
הִכְעִיס אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

In other words, the biblical narrator places explicit blame for Nadab's death and the destruction of his house, not on Yahweh's word spoken against Jeroboam, nor on Nadab's Jeroboam, but on Nadab and his actions, which “provoked” Yahweh to “anger.”

While the syntactical structure and the context of this second theological evaluation are different from the first theological evaluation uttered against Nadab in 15:26, this second theological evaluation has the same monologic result as the first. Yahweh may have spoken doom against Jeroboam and his house, but it was Nadab's own sinful actions, according to the biblical narrator, that led to his death and destruction. Nadab is finalized as one who deserved his death and the destruction of his house, not because of his father's sins, but because he himself “caused Israel to sin” (הִחַטִּיא אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל) and “provoked” (הִכְעִיס) Yahweh to become “angry.” Thus, while it seems that Nadab did have a choice to not commit the sins that his father Jeroboam committed and escape Yahweh's judgment, the dialogic reader has no choice but to

⁴⁸⁵ See Waltke-O'Connor, §11.2.13.e, show how the preposition על may show cause and be translated “because of.” See also the discussion of causal clauses, §38.4. See also Paul Joüon, S. J. and T. Muraoka, §170h, (*continued next page*)

interpret Nadab as “evil in the eyes of Yahweh” because the biblical narrator’s point of view has indicated so.

The biblical narrator re-accentuates this second example of a theological evaluation for Baasha, Elah, and Zimri. The biblical narrator uses the same syntactical structure and speech genres for these kings to give the cause for their deaths and the destruction of their families. He also uses this kind of evaluation and to deaden their consciousnesses in relationship towards Yahweh as kings “provoking” him “to anger,” and in relationship to Israel as kings “causing” them “to sin.” In his evaluation of Baasha and Elah, the biblical narrator adds the semantic dimension that they provoked Yahweh to anger specifically “with their idols.” See below:

1 Kings 16:13 – Concerning both Baasha and his son, Elah
אֵל כָּל־חַטָּאוֹת בַּעֲשָׂא וְחַטָּאוֹת אֱלֹה בְּנוֹ אֲשֶׁר חָטְאוּ וְאֲשֶׁר חָטְאוּ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל
לְהַכְעִיס אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהַבְלִיָּהֶם:

(Because of all the sins of Baasha and the sins of Elah, his son, which they sinned, and which they caused Israel to sin to provoke Yahweh the God of Israel to anger with their idols.)⁴⁸⁶

1 Kings 16:19 – Concerning Zimri
עַל־ (חַטָּאוֹתוֹ) [חַטָּאוֹתָיו] אֲשֶׁר חָטְאָ לַעֲשׂוֹת הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה לְלַכֵּת בְּדַרְךְ יִרְבֵּעַם
וּבַחַטָּאוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְהַחַטִּיא אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל:

(Because of his sins which he sinned to do evil in the eyes of Yahweh, to walk in the way of Jeroboam and in his sins which he caused Israel to sin.)

The biblical narrator offers a third example of a theological evaluation for Baasha beginning in 16:1 with the report that “the word of Yahweh was to Jehu, son of Hanani, concerning Baasha saying” (וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־יְהוּא בֶן־חַנָּנִי עַל־בַּעֲשָׂא לְאֹמֵר). This report

“The most common preposition for causality is על.”

⁴⁸⁶ Paul Joüon, S. J. and T. Muraoka, §133b, point out how אֵל often corresponds to על, and that the “parallel drawn between these two prepositions was probably facilitated by graphic confusion.” It is “mainly אֵל which is found written for על,” they write, as seen in the example above in 16:13 and noted by alternative reading in the (continued next page)

suggests that the biblical narrator has a desire to allow Jehu to express his point of view to Baasha. Yet, although a speech discourse may have been uttered by Jehu’s voice, the words he uttered were not an expression of his own consciousness. The biblical narrator says that they are Yahweh’s words, which shows that they are an expression of Yahweh’s consciousness. The biblical narrator allows Yahweh’s voice to penetrate his monologic discourse by allowing Yahweh’s point of view concerning Baasha to objectify Jehu’s speech discourse. Yahweh uses Jehu’s voice in 16:2, it seems, to remind Baasha of how he “raised” him “from the dust” (הֶעֱפָרָה מִן הָאֲדָמָה), and how he made him a “leader” (נָגִיד) over his people Israel. Yahweh also uses Jehu’s voice in 16:3–4 to speak judgment against Baasha, declaring that he will in make his house like the house of Jeroboam, son of Nebat.⁴⁸⁷

However, although Yahweh is allowed to express himself concerning Baasha, Baasha is not allowed to respond to Yahweh’s word. Moreover, the reader is able to recognize that the biblical narrator does to Yahweh’s voice what Yahweh did to Jehu’s voice. He objectifies Yahweh’s speech with his authorial point of view by inserting his own already spoken accusations of Nadab and Baasha walking “in the way of Jeroboam,” “causing Israel to sin,” and “provoking Yahweh to anger” in 16:2. In other words, just as the reader thinks he is hearing Yahweh’s point of view concerning Baasha, the biblical narrator’s point of view seems to intrude upon Yahweh’s point of view. Yahweh and the biblical narrator both compete for control of Jehu’s voice in order to further finalize Baasha as an “evil” king.

textual apparatus. Joüon and Muraoka attribute this confusion of words to “copyists who spoke Aramaic.”

⁴⁸⁷ Yahweh’s word prophesies that the dogs of the city and birds of the field eat the corpses of Baasha’s family in 16:4 just as it prophesied to Jeroboam in 14:11.

A few verses later in 16:7, the biblical narrator offers yet another theological evaluation of Baasha much like the second example he spoke for Nadab. This time the biblical narrator acknowledges that “again” (וַיִּגַּם) the word of Yahweh spoke to Baasha through Jehu. Yet, he does not allow Yahweh to speak at all this time. The biblical narrator takes complete control of Yahweh’s discourse by inserting the already spoken words of his second theological evaluation concerning Nadab in 15:30. The reason for judgment against Baasha and his family, he says, is “because of all the evil he did in the eyes of Yahweh to provoke him to anger by the works of his hands to be like the house of Jeroboam.”

וְעַל כָּל-הָרָעָה אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה לְהַכְעִיסוֹ בְּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו לְהִיּוֹת כְּבַיִת יִרְבְּעָם

These two particular theological evaluations concerning Baasha show that even when a character is seemingly allowed to speak, the biblical narrator still seeks to control the narrative discourse from his own point of view. He objectifies a character’s discourse and consciousness with his own discourse and consciousness for his own monologic purpose, which is to finalize the Israelite kings as “evil in the eyes of Yahweh” for “walking in the sins of Jeroboam” and for “provoking Yahweh to anger.”

The biblical narrator speaks a fourth example of a theological evaluation in his regnal report of Omri. This theological evaluation exemplifies the most striking re-accentuation of words already spoken, thus far, as the biblical narrator increases his monologic force towards Omri’s consciousness and his deeds as king of Israel (see the theological evaluation of Omri below).

1 Kings 16:25–26 – Concerning Omri

וַיַּעַשׂ עֹמְרִי הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה וַיִּרַע מְכֹל אֲשֶׁר לִפְנָיו:
וַיֵּלֶךְ בְּכָל-דֶּרֶךְ יִרְבְּעָם בְּנֹנֶכֶט (וּבַחֲטָאֵתוֹ) [וּבַחֲטָאֵתוֹן]
אֲשֶׁר הִחֲטִיא אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהַכְעִיס אֶת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
בְּהַבְלִיָּהִם:

(And Omri did evil in the eyes of Yahweh, and he did more evil than all before him. He walked in every way of Jeroboam, son of Nebat and his sins which he caused Israel to sin to provoke Yahweh the God of Israel to anger with their idols.)

This theological evaluation, like the ones concerning the other Israelite kings, finalizes Omri in relationship to Yahweh, to Jeroboam, son of Nebat, and to Israel. This theological evaluation, like the one concerning Baasha and Elah in 16:13, also connects Omri's "causing Israel to sin" and "provoking" Yahweh to anger specifically with "(their) idols." (בְּהַבְלֵי יְהוָה)

The biblical narrator re-accentuates these words which he already spoke about the other kings with greater force towards Omri by combining two different theological evaluations into one new theological evaluation for Omri.⁴⁸⁸ He also increases the monologic force towards Omri with a second re-accentuation of these already spoken words, as he inserts a new semantic dimension that compares Omri and his deeds to the other kings and their deeds.⁴⁸⁹ Omri "did *more evil than all* before him" (וַיַּרְע מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר לְפָנָיו), and "walked in *every* way of Jeroboam, son of Nebat (וַיֵּלֶךְ בְּכָל-דֶּרֶךְ יְרֻבְעָם בֶּן-נְבָט), the biblical narrator writes.⁴⁹⁰

In other words, the other kings did "evil," but Omri did more evil than they did, according to the biblical narrator. The other kings "walked in the sins of Jeroboam," but Omri walked in "every way of Jeroboam." By finalizing Omri in relationship to the kings before him and to

⁴⁸⁸ It is as if the biblical narrator combines the two theological evaluation of King Baasha in 15:34 and 16:13. In this one monologic utterance, the biblical narrator tells the reader that Omri "did evil in the eyes of Yahweh" and that he "walked in the way of Jeroboam, son of Nebat and in his sins," and that by doing so "he caused Israel to sin to provoke Yahweh, the God of Israel to anger with their idols."

⁴⁸⁹ The biblical narrator adds this new comparative dimension into this theological evaluation with the words מִכָּל ("from all") and בְּכָל ("in all," or, "every"). מִכָּל is a Hebrew comparative translated "more than all" with the relative pronoun אֲשֶׁר, "who," which connects the comparative in this case to the direct object לְפָנָיו, "before him." For discussion on these Hebrew comparatives see Waltke-O'Connor, §11.2.11.

⁴⁹⁰ The biblical narrator, thus, implies that the preceding kings only walked in some, at least not all, of the ways of Jeroboam.

Jeroboam *with these two comparative nuances*, the biblical narrator also finalizes his consciousness and Yahweh's consciousness towards Omri's with even more monologic force than the theological evaluations he uttered against Nadab and Baasha. He crowns Omri most "evil in the eyes of Yahweh," and also in the eyes of the reader, again, not because Yahweh has said so, but because, he, the biblical narrator has said so.

At the end of the first five regnal reports, the dialogic reader can see that the biblical narrator's monologic discourse style shows little desire for creating dialogic relationships among him and the characters. Rather, he shows his desire to dominate the narrative discourse with his point of view in order to finalize the narrative world and the characters with great monologic force. The biblical narrator expresses his point of view predominately through his "unmediated, direct, fully signifying" single-voice discourse, which as Bakhtin writes, expresses the "ultimate semantic authority" of the writer.⁴⁹¹ Even when it seems like he is going to let Yahweh speak his point of view, the biblical narrator inserts his own point of view into Yahweh's discourse.⁴⁹² Thus, for the most part, Yahweh and the Israelite kings are all portrayed as lifeless and voiceless images. Their consciousnesses "organically" die under the control of the biblical narrator's monologic discourse as they are not allowed to take part in the dialogues of this narrative.

Consequently, the biblical narrator's discourse allows little dialogue between his point of view and the reader's point of view. His single-voiced discourse reveals his monologic aim to flatten and finalize the Israelite kings for the reader as fixed images of "evil" in the flattened and finalized consciousness of Yahweh. He expects no one to test or question his point of view that

⁴⁹¹ Bakhtin, *Problems in Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 189.

⁴⁹² Ibid. "Objectified discourse," Bakhtin writes, is likewise single-voice discourse, since it is directed towards the object of the author's intention.

these kings were “evil in the eyes of Yahweh” and guilty of “provoking Yahweh to anger” because they “caused Israel to sin” because they “walked in the sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat.”

C. Setting Ahab Apart for the Ultimate Monologic Death

The introductory speech genre of the sixth and final regnal report concerning Ahab in 1 Kings 16: 29 parallels linguistically his first report concerning Nadab. The biblical narrator moves Ahab’s name to the beginning of the introduction of his regnal report, as Nadab’s name began the regnal report about him, and as opposed to the four middle regnal reports of Baasha, Elah, Zimri, and Omri, which all begin with the temporal clause. The movement of Ahab’s name to the beginning of the regnal report signals the reader that this is the last report of the sequence of regnal reports. The regnal reports of Nadab and Ahab, thus, function as bookends for the larger sequence of six regnal reports by their similarities.⁴⁹³

However, the dialogic reader can recognize that the movement of Ahab’s name to the beginning of his regnal report does not just indicate the end of the sequence of these regnal reports. Moving Ahab’s name to the beginning of this regnal report also brings special attention

⁴⁹³ The reports concerning Nadab (1 Kings 15:25–31) and Ahab (1 Kings 16:29–34) are shown to function as bookends for the larger sequence of reports by their syntactical structure. The first report of Nadab son Jeroboam coming to reign over Israel, for example, begins (1 Kings 15:25) with Nadab’s name followed by the qal perfect verb **מָלַךְ**, “he reigned,” and then the temporal clause, **בַּשָּׁנָה**, “in the year of” which indicates when his reign corresponded with the reign of Asa king of Judah. The next four reports change the syntactical structure of the introductory speech genre, as they begin with the temporal clause and then follow with the qal perfect verb and the name of the Israelite king. This sixth report begins (1 Kings 16:29) as the first report did, with the proper name, **וַאֲחָאָב בֶּן-עֹמְרִי**, “(And) Ahab, son of Omri” followed by the qal perfective indicative form and direct object, “reigned over Israel” **עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל מָלַךְ** and then the temporal clause, **לְאַסָּא מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה**, “in the thirty-eighth year of Asa, king of Judah.” The placing of Ahab’s name at the beginning of this regnal report shows that this is the last report in the sequence and also puts emphasis on the name of “Ahab.” Joüon and Muraoka, §155nb, point out how the “subject may precede the verb on account of emphasis or contrast.”

to *his* name.⁴⁹⁴ The first five kings may have been “evil in the eyes of Yahweh,” but it is now “Ahab” who will be set apart as “most evil” in the eyes of Yahweh.

Following the introductory speech genre in 16:29, which informs the reader that Ahab came to reign over Israel, the biblical narrator deals his first monologic blow against Ahab in 16:30 by saying that “Ahab, son of Omri, did more evil in the eyes of Yahweh than all who were before him” (וַיַּעַשׂ אֲחָאֵב בֶּן־עֹמְרִי הַרְעָה בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר לְפָנָיו). This opening indictment against Ahab is the same comparative theological evaluation the biblical narrator used to finalize Omri in the eyes of Yahweh and in relationship to all the kings before him. Yet, although these are the same words already spoken by the biblical narrator concerning Ahab’s father, they become a completely new utterance re-accentuated for a new context, a new king, and with an even greater monologic force.

The comparative clause, “more than all before him” (מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר לְפָנָיו), compares Ahab’s evil deeds not just to the evil deeds of Nadab, Baasha, Elah, and Zimri, but even to the evil deeds of Omri. Nadab had been mentioned in relationship to his father as well, but it was not said of him that he exceeded his father, Jeroboam son of Nebat, in doing evil. Ahab’s doing *more evil* than all these kings, more than even his father Omri, thus, contrasts the report of Nadab, who only seemed to equal the evil of his father, Jeroboam, by “walking in his sins.” The biblical narrator uses this comparative clause to take the crown of being most “evil in the eyes of Yahweh” away from Omri and fix it on Ahab’s consciousness.

⁴⁹⁴ The biblical narrator also prepares the reader for the coming Elijah narratives and Elijah’s discourses spoken against Ahab (such as in 1 Kings 17:1 and 1 Kings 18:18–19) by not including the typical concluding speech genre for Ahab, which would inform the reader about Ahab’s death, point the reader to a record of the “remainder of his deeds,” and perhaps a report about his burial.

Moreover, the biblical narrator does not just compare Ahab's evil to his father Omri and the other five Israelite kings before him, he also finalizes Ahab in relationship to Nadab's father, Jeroboam in 16:31, as he did in his reports about the other five kings. The biblical narrator re-accentuates comparison to Jeroboam, however, against Ahab, here, with a new semantic dimension of these already spoken words. This re-accentuation increases the monologic force against Ahab and further sets him apart from the other five kings as "most evil." He tells the reader that Ahab "*considered it a light thing*, to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat"

(וַיְהִי הַנִּקְלָ לְכַתּוֹ בַּחַטָּאוֹת יִרְבְּעָם בֶּן־נִבְט).⁴⁹⁵

This accusation has a deadening affect on Ahab's consciousness, because these words do not just tell the reader how Yahweh was conscious of Ahab's deeds. They transcend Ahab's consciousness and tell the reader how he was conscious of his own deeds. The reader does not hear Ahab's say that he considered it "a light thing to walk in the sins of Jeroboam," nor is Ahab allowed to respond to this accusation. This report leaves Ahab's consciousness dead under the powerful control of the biblical narrator's direct and unmediated monologic discourse and point of view, and shows the biblical narrator has no desire to create dialogue with Ahab or with the reader about Ahab.

⁴⁹⁵ הַנִּקְלָ is the niph'al perfect third person masculine singular form from the verb קָלַל with an interrogative particle attached to it. *GKC*, §150d. Gesenius lists הַנִּקְלָ in this passage as an example of an interrogative that has a rhetorical function. The force of this interrogative particle in front of the verb, thus, does not lead the reader to question *if* Ahab considered it a light thing to walk in the sins of Jeroboam. It rather affirms the certainty that he did so from the biblical narrator's point of view. See also Ezekiel 8:17 where the verb is used with the interrogative particle. Yahweh uses the force of the interrogative not to question, but to affirm the fact that Judah "considered it too light of thing" to do detestable things.

The biblical narrator then offers his proof that Ahab considered it a light thing to walk in the sins of Jeroboam with a series of four reports in 16:31–32 concerning Ahab’s deeds. He reports that:

1. Ahab took Jezebel for his wife, daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians (16:31)
וַיִּקַּח אִשָּׁה אֶת-אֵיזָבֶל בַּת-אֶתְבָּעַל מֶלֶךְ צִידֹנִים
2. He went and served Baal and worshipped him (16:31)
וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיַּעֲבֹד אֶת-הַבַּעַל וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לּוֹ
3. He raised up an altar for Baal, in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria (16:32)
וַיִּקְּם מִזְבֵּחַ לַבַּעַל בַּיִת הַבַּעַל אֲשֶׁר בָּנָה בְּשֹׁמְרוֹן
4. And Ahab made an Asherah (16:33)
וַיַּעַשׂ אֲחָאָב אֶת-הָאֲשֵׁרָה

These reports do not recount acts of death and destruction as the reports about the preceding kings informed the reader, but rather itemize all of Ahab’s idolatrous deeds. First, these reports name the foreign people that Ahab had relationships with. These people are significant, however, not because they are “foreign” as Tribble would suggest, but because they worshipped Canaanite gods. By marrying Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, Ahab welcomed the worship of her gods.⁴⁹⁶

Second, these reports name the particular Canaanite gods of Jezebel, Baal and Asherah, and even tell the reader that Ahab was active in serving and worshipping them. The force behind the naming of these names is important for the reader to consider. The biblical narrator had only stated that the Elah (16:13) and Omri (16:26) had provoked Yahweh to anger “with their idols.” He did not mention the names of their idols or gods. Tribble sees the significance in the naming of these Canaanite gods pertaining to the “Deuteronomistic” disposition towards Jezebel. The

⁴⁹⁶ See Tribble, “Exegesis for Storytellers and other Strangers,” 4. Tribble also points out how the Hebrew vowel pointing “yields the perverted meaning ‘dung,’” instead of Canaanite meaning “Where is the Prince?” Tribble suggests that this meaning “anticipates the return of fertility, the release of Baal from the power of Mot, the god of death. For further discussion of the name of Jezebel see John Gray, *I and II Kings* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 368.

naming of Baal and the repetition his name, according to her, focuses hostility “on her religious affiliation.”⁴⁹⁷

In the context of all that has been spoken against Ahab, however, the naming of these Canaanite gods and even the mentioning of Jezebel’s name shows the aim of the biblical narrator’s monologic discourse is directed towards Ahab, not Jezebel.⁴⁹⁸ The specific mentioning of Baal and Asherah as the gods Ahab worshipped continues to set him, not Jezebel, apart as the “most evil” in the eyes of Yahweh. Ahab’s worship of these specific gods was “more evil” than the kings before him who simply provoked Yahweh to anger with “their idols.” Ahab’s building places of worship for Baal and Asherah in Samaria was “more evil” than even his father’s building of the city of Samaria, which would become known for its pagan worship.

The naming of these particular Canaanite leader and their gods also serves as further proof that Ahab did not just “walk in the sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat,” but that he “considered it a light thing” to do so. Jezebel, Ethbaal, Baal, and Asherah, thus, are not the main aim of the biblical narrator’s monologic force in this regnal report. Ahab is the one who is compared to Jeroboam, not they. Thus, the names of these Canaanite leaders and gods do not focus the reader’s attention on their evil deeds, but rather become the monologic graveyard where the biblical narrator chooses to bury Ahab’s already dead and objectified consciousness.

As if the theological evaluations and the reports of Ahab’s idolatrous sins were not enough to finalize his consciousness for the reader, the biblical narrator sets his discourse concerning

⁴⁹⁷ Tribble, “Exegesis for Storytellers and Other Strangers,” 4. “Three times in their censure of Ahab,” Tribble writes, “the Deuteronomists spit out the name of her god.”

⁴⁹⁸ In other words, the biblical narrator has already told the reader that “Ahab did more evil than all the kings before him” (16:30), and that “Ahab considered it a light thing to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat” (16:31), and offered four reports of Ahab’s idolatrous actions (16:30–31). He has not yet spoken against Jezebel’s actions. The biblical narrator is, thus, speaking against Ahab and his idolatry, not Jezebel and her gender or race.

Ahab apart from the other Israelite kings with yet another theological evaluation concerning Ahab's consciousness in relationship to Yahweh. In 16:33 the biblical narrator tells the reader that "Ahab continued to do more to provoke Yahweh, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him"

וַיֹּסֶף אַחָב לַעֲשׂוֹת לְהַכְעִים אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכָּל מַלְכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ לְפָנָיו:

This theological evaluation offers no new information about what Ahab did, as it repeats the idea that Ahab "provoked" Yahweh to anger "more than all the kings of Israel who were before him." It does, however, continue to finalize Ahab as most "evil" of the kings for the reader by re-accentuating these already spoken words with two new semantic dimensions.

First, the biblical narrator begins this evaluative utterance with the hiphil imperfect waw consecutive third person singular verb וַיֹּסֶף, "and he continued."⁴⁹⁹ This particular imperfect verb works with the two infinitive constructs לַעֲשׂוֹת and לְהַכְעִים to inform the reader that Ahab "continued to do" and "continued to provoke" Yahweh to "anger." By adding the "continuous" nuance to these infinitives, the biblical narrator *continues* to finalize Ahab's and Yahweh's consciousness in relationship to each other. Ahab is depicted as an unchanging image of one who provoked Yahweh to anger. Yahweh is depicted as an ever angry God of Israel towards Ahab. In other words, Yahweh "continued" to be angry at what Ahab "continued" to do.

Second, the biblical narrator names Yahweh specifically with the title, "the God of Israel," which recalls how the biblical narrator used these same words in his theological evaluations of Baasha and Elah in 16:13, and of Omri in 16:26 as polemical barbs directed specifically towards

⁴⁹⁹ Waltke and O' Connor, §39.3.1b, explain how this verb acts as an adverb meaning "again, further, or continually" when placed in sequence with another verb. Here, the two verbs the qal imperfect waw consecutive (*continued next page*)

their idol worship. Here too, the biblical narrator uses the utterance that “Yahweh is the God of Israel” as a polemically charged barb towards Ahab’s idolatry. However, this confession becomes a new utterance with a much greater force towards Ahab’s idolatry, since it is spoken in the context of the itemized list of Ahab’s idolatrous deeds and the specific mentioning of the Sidonian gods he worshipped. Ahab may be the king of Israel, but he does not serve and worship Yahweh, the God of Israel, the biblical narrator’s words implicitly charge. Ahab worships and builds for the Canaanite gods Baal and Asherah.

The biblical narrator ends his monologic indictment of Ahab with a final report that is much different than the preceding reports and evaluations about Ahab. He tells the reader in 16:34 that “In his days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho. With Abiram, his first born he laid her foundation, and with Segub, his youngest son, he set up her gates.”

בִּימֵיו בָּנָה חִיאל בֵּית הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת־יְרִיחוֹ בְּאִבְרָם בְּכֹרוֹ יִסְדָּהּ (וּבְשִׁגְיָב) [וּבְשִׁגְיָב]
צָעִירוֹ הַצָּיִב דָּלְתֶיהָ כַּדָּבָר יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר בְּיַד יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־נֹון

Unlike his previous reports about Ahab, the biblical narrator acknowledges someone else’s already spoken word in this report. The dialogic reader can recognize that the biblical narrator acknowledges someone else’s word, here, in a much different way than when he took a sideward glance toward the word of Yahweh spoken through Ahijah against Nadab in 15:29, and also in a much different way from when he objectified Yahweh’s speech against Baasha beginning in 16:1.⁵⁰⁰

וַיִּסְרָף and the infinitive construct לַעֲשׂוֹת create such a sequence and should be translated, “and he continued to do.”

⁵⁰⁰ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 189. Thus, the biblical narrator switches from speaking in single-voiced discourse to double-voiced discourse in order to make use “of someone else’s discourse for his own purpose.”

With this report of Hiel building Jericho, the biblical narrator *acknowledges and incorporates* the words already spoken by Joshua, son of Nun, who prophesied a curse upon anyone who would rebuild the city of Jericho after Israel had destroyed it.⁵⁰¹ Yet, the biblical narrator acknowledges and incorporates this already spoken word into his own speech discourse as Yahweh’s word, and not just Joshua’s word. He incorporates this prophetic word into his discourse in order to stylize it from his point of view.⁵⁰² In other words, the biblical narrator uses this prophetic word of Yahweh, “spoken by the hand of Joshua” to show he believes it to be true because it was fulfilled. The death of Abiram and Segub, according to the biblical narrator, is proof that Yahweh’s word “spoken by the hand of Joshua” came true against Hiel for his actions of rebuilding Jericho.

The naming of Hiel and his sons, however, is again, intended to indict Ahab and his evil more than bring attention to Hiel’s rebuilding of Jericho. The biblical narrator re-accentuates Yahweh’s prophetic word by telling the reader that this prophecy was fulfilled specifically “in his days” (בִּימָיו), meaning “in Ahab’s days.” The dialogic overtone of “in his days” draws more attention to Ahab’s “evil” than to Hiel’s actions of rebuilding Jericho. Only the most “evil” Ahab could support the rebuilding of Jericho in opposition to Yahweh’s prophetic word spoken by someone as important in Israel’s history as Joshua, son of Nun. Thus, the biblical narrator’s re-

⁵⁰¹ See Joshua 6:26:

וַיִּשְׁבַּע יְהוָה וַיֹּשֶׁעַ בְּעַת הַהִיא לֵאמֹר אֲרוּר הָאִישׁ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה
 אֲשֶׁר יָקוּם וּבְנֶה אֶת־הָעִיר הַזֹּאת אֶת־יְרִיחוֹ בְּבָכְרוֹ
 יִסְדָּרְנָהּ וּבְצַעְרֶיהָ יִצְיֵב דָּלְתֶיהָ:

⁵⁰² Stylization happens when the speaker acknowledges and incorporates someone else’s words in speech discourse in order to show agreement with the other person’s words. For explanation see chapter 1.

accentuation of Yahweh's word suppresses Ahab's already dead consciousness with a final indictment that he is "more evil" than all the kings before him "in the eyes of Yahweh."⁵⁰³

At the end of this sixth regnal report, the reader can recognize how the biblical narrator has completely fixed and finalized the consciousnesses of Yahweh and Ahab towards each other with enormous monologic force. The biblical narrator sentenced the first five kings to an "organic" death with his monologic discourse by finalizing them for the reader as fixed images of "evil in the eyes of Yahweh." In the end, however, it is Ahab who is set apart for the ultimate monologic death by the crushing force of the biblical narrator's monologic discourse. Ahab is king, not just of Israel, but king of "evil in the eyes of Yahweh" in this monologically dead world where only the biblical narrator is allowed to speak and be a carrier of his own truth.

III. Bringing Dialogic Life to a Monologically Dead World

A. I Kings 17: Elijah, a Carrier of His Own Word on the Boundary of Others

i. I Kings 17:1 – Elijah Expresses His Own Point of View to Ahab. After killing the dialogue and the dialogic relationships among the characters, the reader, and himself with his monologic discourse style in the six preceding regnal reports (1 Kings 15:25–1 Kings 16:34), the biblical narrator brings the narrative dialogue and the characters to life by changing to a more dialogic discourse style in 1 Kings 17. The biblical narrator uses reports to convey information about the characters, but the dialogic reader can recognize that these reports are not for the purpose of finalizing the characters as fixed images of the distant past. The biblical narrator refrains himself from transcending the characters' consciousness and objectifying their

⁵⁰³ Wiseman, *I and II Kings: An Introduction and Commentary*, 163, writes, "This violation of the divine curse against Jericho (Jos. 6:26) is to be taken as another example of Ahab's sin."

discourses, and instead, allows the characters to express themselves and their points of views in dialogue with others.

The dialogic reader is also able to recognize how the biblical narrator begins to invite the reader a partner in dialogue with his authorial point of view and with the characters' point of view. His dialogic address opens zones of contact with the reader by leaving the narrative world and the characters unfinalized and evolving on the boundary of each other, which invites the reader to interpret the characters as more complex characters than the characters of the preceding regnal reports who were flattened as fixed and finalized images by the biblical narrator's monologic discourse. As a result, the dialogic reader is invited to interpret the characters in chapter 17 as the complex characters they are depicted to be. The dialogic reader will seek to interpret not "who" these characters "are," or "what" they are "like," but rather how they are conscious of themselves, each other, and of the world they live in.

The biblical narrator changes his discourse style to a more dialogic one in 1 Kings 17:1 by introducing a new character. This new character is not another Israelite king, but rather "Elijah."⁵⁰⁴ The biblical narrator does not offer much biographical information about Elijah. He does not, for instance, introduce Elijah by his relationship to his father as he introduced the Israelite kings in each regnal report and also Yahweh's spokesman, Jehu in 16:1.⁵⁰⁵ He also does

⁵⁰⁴ See Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 331, points out Elijah to the importance of the biblical reader introducing Elijah by his name as an indicator to the reader that this character is now important to the narrative world. Sternberg writes, "If for a biblical agent to come on stage nameless is to be declared faceless, then to bear a name is to assume an identity: to become a singular existent, with an assured place in history and a future in the story."

⁵⁰⁵ See, for instance, how the biblical narrator introduced Jehu as "the son of Hanani" in I Kings 16:1.

Also, characters' names often contribute towards the understanding of consciousness, such as "Jacob" which means to "grasp one's heel," an ancient idiom equivalent to our modern version of "pulling one's leg" implying an act of deception. Jacob grows up to speak and act in dialogic deception towards his brother, his father, and his uncle. "Elijah" means "Yahweh is my God," which points to and reinforces the confession he makes to Ahab in 17:1.

not give the reader a finalizing theological evaluation of Elijah as he did for the Israelite kings. Instead, the biblical narrator creates his first zone of contact with the reader by leaving Elijah and his consciousness open and able to evolve for the reader. Elijah, the biblical narrator writes, is simply “the Tishbite from Tishbe of Gilead.”⁵⁰⁶

The biblical narrator introduces Elijah with the same waw consecutive imperfect third person singular verb form he used to control the narrative discourse in his regnal reports. However, although the verb form is the same, the verb is not. The verb, **וַיִּאמֶר**, reports Elijah’s speech, not his actions.⁵⁰⁷ With this verb, the biblical narrator shows a desire to allow someone else to express their point of view with their own voice for the first time since the biblical narrator allowed the word of Yahweh to speak through Jehu, son of Hanani against Baasha in 16:1–4.⁵⁰⁸ Elijah, the biblical narrator reports, spoke to “Ahab,” which brings to the reader’s mind the immediate context of the biblical narrator’s regnal report of this particular Israelite King. Ahab, it seems, was not just set apart from the other Israelite kings *by* the biblical narrator’s monologic voice, but also *for* the voice of Elijah.

⁵⁰⁶ This phrase most likely identifies Elijah with his hometown or birthplace. See Wiseman, *I and II Kings: An Introduction and Commentary*, 164. Wiseman points to how the biblical narrator introduces Ahijah, the “servant” of Yahweh with his hometown as he calls him “Ahijah the Shilonite” (I Kings 15:29). Scholars are unsure as to the exact location of Tishbi. Gilead is located northeast of the Jordan River. The specification of Gilead distinguishes this “Tishbi” from the “Tishbi of Naphtali” mentioned in the book of Tobit (1:2). Some scholars such as DeVries and Cohen believe that the “i” sound should be vocalized as “o” instead giving the meaning “settler.” See DeVries, *I Kings*, 216. There is no textual proof for such a change in vocalization, however. Therefore this author agrees with Wiseman that “Tishbi” is most likely the birth place of Elijah. Also, “Gilead” is mentioned twice in I Kings 4 in order to tell the reader where someone was from: Ben-Geber—in Ramoth Gilead (4:13) and Geber son of Uri—in Gilead (4:19).

⁵⁰⁷ This verb was used in 16:1 and 16:16 but in the qal infinitive absolute form.

⁵⁰⁸ The voice which the troops at Gibbethon heard in 16:16 was not embodied by someone. The troops, it was reported, simply heard that “Zimri has conspired, and he has killed the king.” Thus, while this utterance represents someone’s point of view, the reader does not who’s point of view.

Elijah expresses himself to Ahab in the form of a good Hebrew oath saying, “As Yahweh the God of Israel lives whom I serve before him, there will no dew or rain these years except by my word.”

חַי־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר עֲמַדְתִּי לְפָנָיו אִם־יְהִיָה הַשָּׁנִים הָאֵלֶּה
טַל וּמָטָר כִּי אִם־לִפִּי דְבָרִי

The biblical narrator does not allow Yahweh to objectify Elijah’s discourse here, as Yahweh did to Jehu’s speech in 16:1–4.⁵⁰⁹ In other words, this would have been a natural place for the biblical narrator to add an insertion such as, “And the word of Yahweh was to Elijah saying . . .,” or “And Elijah said, ‘Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel.’” Neither the biblical narrator, nor Elijah, however, makes a reference to this oath being Yahweh’s word. Instead, the biblical narrator begins to show a desire to create dialogue among the characters as he and Yahweh allow Elijah to declare that there will be no dew or rain except by *his word*.⁵¹⁰ Elijah, unlike the Israelite kings, seems to speak as a carrier of his own word independent of the finalizing voice of the biblical narrator.

The biblical narrator further shows Elijah’s voice to be independent from his authorial control by not objectifying Elijah’s speech by inserting his own already spoken words towards the other Israelite kings. In other words, the biblical narrator could have inserted into Elijah’s speech accusations towards Ahab concerning doing “evil in the eyes of Yahweh,” “walking in the sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat,” “causing Israel to sin,” and “provoking Yahweh to anger” as he had also done to Yahweh’s word spoken through Jehu in 16:1–4. Instead, he seemingly

⁵⁰⁹ See 1 Kings 16:1.

⁵¹⁰ Bakhtin, *Problems in Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 5, writes, “The Character is treated as ideologically authoritative and independent; he is perceived as the author of a fully weighted ideological conception of his own, and not as the object of” the author’s finalizing vision.

allows Elijah to speak his point of view pertaining to the developing circumstances of the narrative world at a distance from his authorial control.

Elijah's address to Ahab, which promises that there will be no more "dew" or "rain" in the coming years "except by his word," reminds the biblical reader of how Moses spoke. Not since Moses has a representative of Yahweh spoken authoritatively like this without an intrusion from Yahweh or the biblical narrator's point of view.⁵¹¹ The lack of indication that Elijah's word is Yahweh's word and the absence of the biblical narrator's voice in Elijah's speech causes the reader to consider the relationship of Elijah's word to both Yahweh's word and the biblical narrator's word. Tribble's deconstructive interpretation of Elijah's word reads with suspicion of whether Elijah is speaking Yahweh's word. He must be "elevating his own word to equal authority" as Yahweh and his word, she asserts. "Free of editorial restraints," she writes, "Elijah appears as good subject exalting himself in word and deed."⁵¹²

Tribble's interpretation of Elijah's oath to Ahab, however, oversimplifies Elijah's character as a mere tool in the hands of the Deuteronomist writers. By only focusing on his last utterance, "except by my word," she does not recognize the complexities of Elijah's speech and how his speech reveals how he is conscious of Yahweh. First, her desire to interpret Elijah as some kind of divine ego leads her to interpret something concerning Elijah that was probably not intended by the biblical narrator.⁵¹³ If the biblical narrator was trying to show Elijah to be the ego that

⁵¹¹ See Robert Polzin, *Moses and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomistic History* (New York: Seabury, 1980), pt. 1. Polzin argues that the biblical narrator in Deuteronomy often shows Moses to speak authoritatively on behalf of Yahweh, yet independent from Yahweh's consciousness.

⁵¹² See Tribble, "Exegesis for Storytellers and other Strangers," 4.

⁵¹³ See Tribble, "Exegesis for Storytellers and other Strangers," 3. This would not be surprising since Tribble herself says she is not as interested in the intent of the biblical author or narrator as much as "spicing theological discussions." Moreover, one must wonder if Elijah had mentioned that his word was Yahweh's word, would Tribble have used his speech as further reason to deconstruct the "Deuteronomists" ideology towards Jezebel?

Trible suggests he is, the biblical narrator would have probably directly indicated as much for the reader, as other biblical narrators have clearly indicated such negative characterization of other servants of Yahweh. The biblical narrator in Numbers 20, for instance, allows Yahweh to scold Moses for elevating himself equal to God by asking the grumbling Israelites if “we” should bring water from the rock (Numbers 20:10). Yahweh then in 20:12 tells Moses that because he did not set him apart as holy in the eyes of the people that he would not allow Moses to enter the promise land.

Second, Trible’s interpretation of Elijah as “elevating his word equal” to Yahweh’s word misses *how* Elijah’s re-accentuation of the typical Hebrew oath speech genre reveals his consciousness of Yahweh. Studying how Elijah re-accentuates this oath shows that his purpose is not to elevate himself or his word to Yahweh, but on the contrary, to show that he is under Yahweh. In other words, although Elijah gives attention to “his” own word, his speech expression shows that he sees himself speaking on behalf of Yahweh, not as an equal to Yahweh. Thus, by allowing Elijah to speak in such a way, the biblical narrator blurs the lines between Elijah’s word and Yahweh’s word for the reader to show that Elijah’s word, like Moses’ word, is not elevated to Yahweh’s word, but has Yahweh’s authority.⁵¹⁴ Studying how Elijah expresses himself with this oath also shows Elijah to speak like Moses in that he specifically speaks against those who participate in idolatrous worship, and in a way that seems to have power over nature.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹⁴ See Polzin, *Moses and the Deuteronomist*, 25. Polzin, in his dialogic reading of Deuteronomy, argues that often times Moses speaks without any indication from his point of view or the biblical narrator’s point of view that his word is Yahweh’s word. Thus, it is “impossible to distinguish between the speech of YHWH and the speech of Moses,” he writes. The biblical narrator blurs the boundaries between the two characters’ speech discourses, Polzin argues. He points to Deuteronomy 2:10–11, 20–33; 3:9, 11, 13–14 as examples where Moses begins by quoting Yahweh, but then shifts his speech from Yahweh’s point of view to his own.

⁵¹⁵ See Brodie, *The Crucial Bridge*, 46–48, for a comparison of Elijah to Moses. He compares Elijah to Moses (*continued next page*)

Elijah's oath begins as many Israelite oaths begin, יְיָ־יְהוָה , "Yahweh is alive!"⁵¹⁶ This phrase is uttered by numerous other biblical characters, which shows that this phrase had most likely become a typical speech genre within the Israelite community.⁵¹⁷ The Canaanites, according to Bronner's study of the Ras Shamra texts, had a similar confession, "And behold, alive is the mighty one, Baal, and behold, the Prince Lord of Earth, exists!" which was spoken as a confession of faith in Baal as the living god.⁵¹⁸ Elijah's oath that "Yahweh is alive," along with the "imprecation uttered by the prophet" that there would be no rain, according to Bronner, reveals the polemic intent of the writer. The writer of these narratives "was acquainted with the myths of Baal, as the giver of rain," she writes, and he wished "to uproot these fallacious ideas by demonstrating that God alone fulfills these functions."⁵¹⁹

Bronner's comparison of Elijah's oath to similar Canaanite confessions in Baal is helpful for understanding the religious and cultural context in which these narratives were written, but her analysis of Elijah's discourse does not explain how his words reveal his character. Elijah's confession, "Yahweh lives!" reveals more than the possible polemical intent of the historical

in the ways mentioned above, and also points out that Yahweh spoke to both of these two characters at Sinai (also Horeb), and that although these two characters displayed great power in unique ways, both were replaceable.

⁵¹⁶ Joüon and Muraoka, §165b, consider this an "exclamatory formula" to an oath. They translate these words as "Yahweh is alive!"

⁵¹⁷ This is a good example of what Bakhtin means by every speech genre has a *typical* expression and an assimilated *individual* expression. Here the oath formula beginning with the words, "Yahweh is alive" is what Bakhtin would consider the *typical* expression – general form of the speech genre, which Elijah probably learned from his Israelite community. For the usage of this introductory Hebrew oath formula in biblical narrative See Waltke and O'Connor, §42.2b. This particular speech genre is spoken many times in the biblical narrative, including in Judges 8:19, Ruth 3:13, and I Samuel 24:39.

⁵¹⁸ See Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha*, 74–75. Bronner explains that there is a similar expression in Ugaritic. The similar expression, however, is not used in oath formulas, but as statements of affirmations. She translates the similar confession, "And behold, alive is the mighty one, Baal, and behold, the Prince Lord of Earth, exists!" Elijah's usage, she pointed out, is in the language of an oath," and therefore, "an imprecation uttered by the prophet calling down upon himself the punishment of God if he is not telling the truth."

⁵¹⁹ Ibid.

author. His words reveal that he personally believes that Yahweh is a God who is truly alive. Moreover, in light of Bronner's study of the similar Canaanite confession in Baal as the living god, the reader must assume that Ahab would have known the Canaanite confession in Baal from his wife, Jezebel, and from his own participation in the cultic worship of Baal, which was reported in 16:31–32. Thus, Elijah's confession that "Yahweh is alive!" most likely functions as a polemical barb, aimed towards Ahab and his confession in Baal as the living god.

Elijah's consciousness towards Yahweh and Ahab is further revealed with his next utterance that Yahweh is "the God of Israel" (אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל).⁵²⁰ The experienced biblical reader can sense that these words are also most likely a learned speech genre in the Israelite community just as the introduction of a Hebrew oath, "Yahweh is alive!" because these words, too, have already been spoken by a number of characters throughout the biblical narrative.⁵²¹ The biblical narrator, himself, just uttered this confession four times in the preceding regnal reports, including as a polemical barb towards Ahab in 16:33. In fact, the reader has to wonder if these particular words could actually be an implicit refraction of the biblical narrator's point of view intruding Elijah's discourse.⁵²² Although the biblical narrator does not objectify Elijah's speech with same intrusive force as he did with Yahweh's speech in 16:1–4, and although this may just be a speech genre that Elijah has learned to use within his own Israelite community, the reader, can at least

⁵²⁰ However, when Elijah notes that Yahweh is the "God of Israel before whom I serve," he is assimilating or re-accentuating the general nature of this oath speech genre to meet the needs of his *individual* expression. For a distinction of *typical* and *individual speech genres*, see Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," 88–89.

⁵²¹ The experienced biblical reader knows that they have also been spoken by countless others throughout the biblical narrative, such as the biblical narrator in Gen. 33, Moses in Exodus 5 to Pharaoh, and King David with this same introductory oath formula in I Samuel 25:34. Moreover, this confession appears in the theological evaluations of Nadab (15:30), Baasha and Elah (16:13), Omri (16:26), and Ahab (16:33).

⁵²² The biblical narrator used this confession to speak towards the idolatry of Baasha and Elah in 16:13, of Omri in 16:26 and of Ahab in 16:33.

sense the biblical narrator's point of view quietly in the background of Elijah's confession that Yahweh is "the God of Israel."

Yet, just as the reader may begin to question the presence of the biblical narrator's point of view in Elijah's speech discourse, Elijah distinguishes his speech as an expression of his own consciousness most clearly by confessing that Yahweh is the God of Israel, "whom I serve" (אֲשֶׁר עֲמַדְתִּי לְפָנָיו).⁵²³ Unlike the preceding two utterances of Elijah's oath, these words have never been spoken as a single utterance in the biblical narrative, let alone in an oath formula.⁵²⁴ Elijah's *individual* expression within these other *typical* speech genres reveals to the reader that Elijah has truly begun to be a carrier of his own word and express his own point of view to Ahab. He is not finalized in his relationship to Yahweh by the biblical narrator's monologic discourse as the Israelite kings were in the preceding regnal reports, but rather he is allowed to confess his own faith in Yahweh from his own point of view independent of the biblical narrator's consciousness.

Moreover, Elijah's re-accentuation of this common Hebrew oath formula for his own individual confession in Yahweh further reveals how Elijah is conscious of Yahweh and Ahab. His speech expression shows that he agrees with the biblical narrator's point of view about Yahweh revealed in the previous regnal reports, that Yahweh is the God of Israel. While the reader may not fully understand how Elijah's word is related to Yahweh's word yet, the reader can sense that Elijah is most likely not trying to elevate himself or his word equal to Yahweh and

⁵²³ Joüon and Muraoka, §112a, translate the verb עֲמַדְתִּי, "I serve" instead of the usual meaning "I stand." For this verb to be in a standing position, they write, it should be "treated like a stative verb when its meaning is practically stative." Thus, according to them, in the oath formula the reader is to translate "I serve" instead of "I stand."

⁵²⁴ Only Elijah and his predecessor Elisha will speak these words again in such an oath formula. See 1 Kings 18:15, II Kings 3:14, and II Kings 5:16.

his word, as Tribble suggests. By confessing that he “serves” Yahweh, Elijah shows the reader that he believes that Yahweh is above him as “God of Israel,” not equal to him.

Elijah’s speech expression implies that he also agrees with the biblical narrator’s point of view revealed in the previous regnal reports concerning Ahab. By acknowledging Yahweh as “the God of Israel” whom he “serves,” Elijah strengthens the polemical force of his discourse against Ahab and his confession in Baal. When Elijah’s re-accentuation of this Hebrew oath is read in the context of the already spoken words of the biblical narrator concerning Ahab, the reader can see how his re-accentuation functions as a polemical barb directed towards this king of Israel whom the biblical narrator reported “served,” “worshipped,” and “built” for Baal and Asherah, the gods of the Sidonians, not for Yahweh, the God of Israel.

With the emergence of Elijah as a true dialogic consciousness expressing himself on the boundary of Ahab, the reader anticipates that the biblical narrator would now create true dialogue among these characters by allowing Ahab to finally express his own point of view in response to Elijah’s oath. Yet, the biblical narrator suppresses Ahab’s voice here as he did in his regnal report. The reader knows how the biblical narrator is conscious of Ahab, and he or she has a pretty good idea of how Elijah is conscious of Ahab, but the reader still does not know how Ahab is conscious of Elijah or anyone else from his own point of view.

Although the biblical narrator has allowed Elijah to express his own point of view as a carrier of his own truth, he has seemingly done so only to further his monologic aim of finalizing Ahab’s dead consciousness as “evil in the eye of Yahweh.” The dialogic life that the narrator has created by allowing Elijah to speak his own word is, consequently, stunted in this first narrative scene of chapter 17 by the biblical narrator’s control to abruptly end this scene in just one verse

after Elijah’s oath. Elijah may have been brought to dialogic life, but Ahab is still monologically dead.

ii. I Kings 17:2 –9: Elijah on the boundary of Yahweh. While the biblical narrator does not allow Ahab to speak in response to Elijah’s discourse, he does create dialogue between his characters by allowing Yahweh to respond to Elijah’s oath at the beginning of the next narrative scene. The qal imperfect waw consecutive verb, וַיְהִי, informs the reader in 17:2 that another new narrative scene is beginning.⁵²⁵ It also works with the qal infinitive, לְאָמַר, (“saying”) to indicate a dialogic action has taken place—the “word of Yahweh” has spoken to Elijah (אֵלָיו “to him”).⁵²⁶ In 17:3–4 Yahweh commands Elijah, “Go from this (place) and turn towards the east and hide yourself by the brook of Cherith, which is east of the Jordan” and he promises Elijah, “and it will be that from the brook you will drink.”⁵²⁷

לֵךְ מִזֶּה וּפְנִיתָ לָךְ קְדָמָה וְנִסְתַּרְתָּ בְּנַחַל כְּרִית אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי הַיַּרְדֵּן וְהָיָה מִהֵנַחֵל תִּשְׁתָּה

Yahweh then adds a second promise in 17:4 that Elijah will eat during the ensuing famine

⁵²⁵ See Jerome T. Walsh, *Style and Structure in Hebrew Narrative* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 165. Walsh points out that there are four scenes in chapter 17: Elijah’s confrontation with Ahab in 17:1, Elijah’s stay at the brook of Cherith, his stay with the widow of Zarephath, and then the resurrection of the widow’s son. Each of these scenes in 1 Kings 17, he writes, is “separated from the others by clauses that use the narrative tense of the verb “to be” (*wayehi*).

⁵²⁶ See Waltke and O’Connor, §36.2.3e. לְאָמַר, is an infinite construct, but acts as a gerund when following a main verb of speech, they point out. It is, thus, translated “saying,” as it introduces “direct discourse after verbs of saying and of mental activity” such as thinking and praying. For further discussion on this usage of לְאָמַר, see also Cynthia L. Miller, *The Representation of Speech in Biblical Hebrew Narrative: A Linguistic Analysis* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 195. Miller also explains this usage of the verb acts as a gerund used to introduce quotations of speech or thought “when the matrix verb is a metapragmatic verb that indexes communication or a psychological verb that indexes thought.”

⁵²⁷ Here the perfect waw consecutive verbs וּפְנִיתָ and וְנִסְתַּרְתָּ function as the “contextually determined ‘wild card’” and carry “forward the aspect of the verb form with which it is in sequence.” Thus, it acts as an imperative. See Andrew Bartelt, *Concordia Journal* (October 2008): 301; see also Andrew H. Bartelt and Andrew E. Steinmann, *Fundamentals of Biblical Hebrew* (St. Louis: Concordia), 231.

because he has commanded ravens to “sustain” him there at the brook

(וְאַתְהָעֲרָבִים צִוִּיתִי לְכַלְכֵּלָךְ שָׁם).⁵²⁸

Any reader can see that Yahweh’s speech is directed towards Elijah, but the dialogic reader recognizes that Yahweh’s speech is also a response to the oath that there would be no rain or dew in the coming years. Even though Yahweh does not directly acknowledge or quote Elijah’s just spoken discourse to Ahab, his command and promises takes a *sideward glance* at Elijah’s oath. They show that he agrees that there will be no rain in the coming years.⁵²⁹

Furthermore, his second promise to “sustain” Elijah with ravens stands in dialogic relationship to second already spoken word that Elijah and the reader, and apparently even the biblical narrator have not yet heard – the command that Yahweh apparently has spoken to ravens concerning their sustaining care of Elijah. Yahweh does not directly acknowledge or quote the actual words that he seemingly spoke to the ravens either, but offers Elijah and the reader another sideward glance towards what he said to the ravens, which verifies that his command to them will be fulfilled. Yahweh is shown to be a God who acts behind the scenes speaking words that no other human may hear. Yet, even these unheard words are spoken for the benefit of those like Elijah, who confess him as their God.

Thus, in addition to revealing how Yahweh is conscious of Elijah’s oath to Ahab, Yahweh’s response also begins to reveal how he is conscious of Elijah. Yahweh does not seem

⁵²⁸ כּוּל verb pilpel infinitive construct suffix 2nd person masculine singular. The experienced biblical reader may recall how Yahweh used the birds of the air in the past for such miraculous acts of deliverance and sustenance for His people. Consider the role of the raven and dove in the Noah narrative and how Yahweh miraculously sustained the people of Israel with quail after the Exodus.

⁵²⁹As pointed out in chapter 1, pp. 41–42., when a speaker “takes a sideward glance” at another person’s speech, the speaker addresses another already spoken word with his or her point of view without directly acknowledging or quoting the other person’s speech. See again Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 195. Bakhtin writes, “Another’s discourse in this case is not reproduced with a new intention, but it acts upon, influences, (continued next page)

to think that Elijah has “elevated himself” to co-god of Israel, as Tribble suggested. He does not question what Elijah said to Ahab, or scold him for saying what he said, but rather agrees with Elijah’s oath. His command and promises show his desires to care for Elijah in the midst of the coming circumstances of drought and famine, and from the possible anger of Ahab. Moreover, they show Yahweh calling Elijah to trust his promises even though they are unbelievable. As Elijah’s oath called Ahab to believe that there surely will be no rain in the coming years, Yahweh’s word now calls Elijah to believe in the miraculous promises that he will drink from a brook in a wilderness during the drought, be fed by birds of the air during the ensuing famine, and finally, that he will be hidden from Ahab’s probable wrath.

Yahweh’s command and promises to Elijah, thus, reveal his character to be more complex than the mere polemical instrument of “life” that Bronner and Hauser suggest he is. Yahweh’s speech shows that he is not just concerned with “life” in general. The fact that Yahweh agrees with Elijah’s oath implies that this oath is from Yahweh. In other words, it is Yahweh who is going to bring drought and famine, and consequently, death upon the land of Israel by stopping the rain. Yet, Yahweh is concerned about Elijah’s life. His promises show his agreement with Elijah’s oath to Ahab that there will be no rain, but more importantly for Elijah, they show Yahweh’s desire to sustain Elijah with water, food, and a safe place away from Ahab’s presence through miraculous means.

Like the first scene where Ahab is not allowed to respond with his own word to Elijah, so also in this scene the biblical narrator does not allow Elijah to respond with his own word to Yahweh’s commands and promises. Instead, the biblical narrator chooses to respond to Yahweh’s discourse from his authorial point of view, using a number of *qal* imperfect *waw*

and in one way or another determines the author’s discourse, while itself remaining outside of it.”

consecutive verbs to move the narrative along quickly concerning Elijah’s actions in response to Yahweh’s word.⁵³⁰ He first summarizes Elijah’s actions in 17:5 with the report that Elijah “went and did just as the word of Yahweh” (וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיַּעַשׂ כְּדִבְרֵי יְהוָה).

Perhaps the biblical narrator chooses to speak instead of allowing Elijah to respond with his own word because he wanted to show that Elijah did not question Yahweh’s word, but simply and quietly obeyed Yahweh’s command.⁵³¹ From his point of view, the biblical narrator would agree with Elijah’s personal confession to Ahab that Elijah “serves Yahweh, the God of Israel.” By muting Elijah’s voice, the biblical narrator also seems to suggest that Elijah believed without question in Yahweh’s promise to sustain him with water from the brook and through ravens. If this is the case, then Elijah may be even more unique than Moses. Even Moses questioned Yahweh’s command to go and lead Israel out of Egypt. He also questioned Yahweh’s promises to be with him and to give him the words and miraculous signs to perform that would allow him to lead Israel out of Egypt.⁵³²

The biblical narrator then offers the reader three more fulfillment reports—one report that further shows the reader how Elijah “went and did as the word of Yahweh,” and two reports that show how Yahweh fulfilled his promises to Elijah. The biblical narrator incorporates the words Yahweh spoke to Elijah almost verbatim in two of these fulfillment reports. Yahweh commanded Elijah to hide “at the brook of Cherith, which is on the other side of the Jordan,” and the biblical

530 וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיַּעַשׂ כְּדִבְרֵי יְהוָה וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּנַחַל כְּרִית אֲשֶׁר
וְהָעֲרָבִים מִבְּיָאִים לוֹ לֶחֶם וּבָשָׂר בְּבִקְרֵי וְלֶחֶם וּבָשָׂר
בְּעֶרְבֵי וּמִן־הַנַּחַל יִשְׁתֶּה:

531 Unlike Abraham in Genesis 18:22–33, who questions Yahweh’s intent on destroying Sodom and Gomorah.

532 See Exodus, chapters 3–4.

narrator reports in 17:5 that Elijah dwelled “at the brook of Cherith, which is on the other side of the Jordan.” Yahweh promised Elijah that he would “drink from the brook,” and the biblical narrator reports in 17:6 that Elijah “drank from the brook.”

According to Hauser, the repetitious nature of the biblical narrator’s reports reveal the historical author’s intended polemic to depict Yahweh as the God of life “versus” the Canaanite god of “death,” Mot.⁵³³ The biblical narrator uses the repetition of Yahweh’s words, he argues, to heighten “the stress on Yahweh’s control over the events.”⁵³⁴ Yahweh up to this point, for him, “is a god who can send water or withhold rain, provide life-giving support or withhold such support,” and he is a god “whose words convey power and must be obeyed.”⁵³⁵ The repetition of Yahweh’s words may show Yahweh to be such a God, but Hauser fails to see how the repetition of these words show the biblical narrator’s discourse to be in dialogue with Yahweh and his discourse, and likewise, how the biblical narrator is conscious of Yahweh and his word.

From a Bakhtinian perspective, the dialogic reader recognizes that these repeated words are not just reports, but that they are also the biblical narrator’s response to Yahweh’s already spoken promises to Elijah. The biblical narrator could have just reported, “everything happened just as Yahweh promised,” but by using Yahweh’s words, and by stylizing them into his fulfillment report, the biblical narrator emphasizes the power Yahweh’s word has to make things

⁵³³ Hauser, “Yahweh versus Death,” 21, writes, “The first threat is that Elijah will starve during the drought, which he has helped to cause, which accompanies the hint of possible danger to Elijah’s life posed by Ahab’s wrath.” See also Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha*, 83. Although she does not mention the repetition of Yahweh’s words in the biblical narrator’s fulfillment report, she like Hauser, interprets the miraculous feeding of Elijah by ravens as a miracle that serves as a polemic, not against Mot, but “against Baal myths.”

⁵³⁴ See Hauser, “Yahweh Versus Death,” 14. Instead of seeing the dialogical relationship that the biblical narrator has to Yahweh’s discourse as he incorporates it into his own, Hauser’s plot focused approach sees the “repetition of words and phrases throughout this scene” as heightening “the stress on Yahweh’s control over the events.”

⁵³⁵ Hauser, “Yahweh Versus Death,” 15.

happen when it is spoken, but from authorial his point of view. The biblical narrator, thus, shows that he believes that Yahweh is a God who not only speaks to Elijah, but a God who acts on behalf of Elijah. He also shows that he believes in the truth and power of Yahweh's word because it came true.

Moreover, the biblical narrator's third fulfillment report of how Yahweh fed Elijah by means of ravens in 17:6 does more than just repeat Yahweh's word to show that ravens "sustained" Elijah. The biblical narrator re-accentuates this particular promise by adding a new and significant semantic dimension to Yahweh's word that the ravens brought "bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening" (לֶחֶם וּבָשָׂר בַּבֹּקֶר וְלֶחֶם וּבָשָׂר בְּעֶרְבֹ). By telling the reader that the ravens brought "bread and meat in the morning" and "in the evening," the biblical narrator informs the reader exactly how often and with what Yahweh sustained Elijah by the ravens. This report tells the reader that Yahweh did not just barely sustain Elijah, but that Yahweh provided Elijah with both bread and meat each morning and evening, leaving no doubt in the reader's mind that Yahweh fulfilled his promise to "sustain" Elijah by ravens at this brook.

Bakhtin's dialogic approach also enables the dialogic reader to see how this biblical narrator uses these words, which have already been spoken by other biblical narrators, to reveal Yahweh's relationship to Elijah.⁵³⁶ First, by adding the nuance that Yahweh fed Elijah "in the morning and in the evening," the biblical narrator has the experienced biblical reader recall the already spoken words by the biblical narrator in Genesis 1, who reported that at the end of each

⁵³⁶ Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," 76, explains that an utterance is always related to "other work-utterances: both those to which it responds and those that respond to it." In other words, the words we use in our dialogue, he explains, are often the words other people have spoken. See also Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, 137. "In using words and speaking about topics," they write, the words we use are "already populated, indeed overpopulated with other peoples' utterances about them." In this case, the biblical narrator's fulfillment report is, perhaps, in dialogue, or "populated" with the discourses uttered by other biblical narrators.

day that God created there was both “evening and morning.”⁵³⁷ Perhaps this biblical narrator re-accentuated Yahweh’s promise to sustain Elijah with these particular words from Genesis 1 in order to show the reader that the same God who created the heavens and the earth and the “morning and the evening” (and the ravens) is the same God who has authority over the creation in Elijah’s world. Only this God can turn the rain on and off when he pleases, and only this God can command the ravens, which he created, to sustain Elijah both in the “morning” and in the “evening.”

Second, by reporting that Yahweh sustained Elijah with both “bread and meat in the morning and in the evening” in the wilderness, this biblical narrator has the experienced biblical reader recall words already spoken by the biblical narrator of Exodus 16, who reported how Yahweh fed Israel in the wilderness with “bread” from heaven “in the morning” and with “meat” to eat “in the evening.”⁵³⁸ Perhaps the biblical narrator of 1 Kings 17 re-accentuated Yahweh’s promise to sustain Elijah with these words from Exodus 16 in order to show the reader that the same Yahweh who was God of Israel among Moses and Israel in the wilderness is the same God of Israel among Elijah in the wilderness as well. Only this same Yahweh has proven himself to

⁵³⁷ The biblical reader recalls how the biblical narrator of Genesis 1 informs the reader after each day of creation that *וַיְהִי-עֶרֶב וַיְהִי-בֹקֶר*, “and there was evening and morning.”

⁵³⁸ See Exodus 16 where Yahweh provides bread and quail each day for Israel. Moses and Aaron draw attention to Yahweh’s sustaining activity in the “evening” and in the “morning” as well. In vv. 6–7 they say to the Israelites, “In the evening you will know that it was Yahweh who brought you out of Egypt, and in the morning you will see the glory of Yahweh.”

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶל-כָּל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עֶרֶב וַיִּדְעֻתֶם כִּי
 יְהוָה הוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:
 וּבֹקֶר וַרְאִיתֶם אֶת-כְּבוֹד יְהוָה בְּשִׁמְעוֹ אֶת-תְּלִנְתֵיכֶם
 עַל-יְהוָה וְנָחֲנוּ מָה כִּי (תְּלִינּוּ) תְּלִינּוּ עָלֵינוּ

do miraculous things in history for his people can provide both “bread and meat” in the “morning and evening” during a drought in a wilderness where there is no food to sustain the body.

After the biblical narrator responds to Yahweh’s word with these fulfillment reports of how he sustained Elijah, he moves the narrative along with two more reports introduced by the qal imperfect waw consecutive וַיְהִי, (and it happened). The biblical narrator first informs the reader in 17:7, “and it happened at the end of days, the brook dried up because there was no rain in the land,” (וַיְהִי מִקֵּץ יָמִים וַיִּבֶשׂ הַנַּחַל כִּי לֹא־הָיָה גֶשֶׁם בְּאֶרֶץ). This report shows the results of Elijah’s fulfilled word to Ahab that there would be “no dew or rain” except by his word.

This report also offers the reader a subtle, but important dialogic overtone in the biblical narrator’s choice of word for “rain.” Elijah told Ahab there would be no גֶּשֶׁם, which is the more general word for “rain” and describes the regular kind of precipitation that a land would receive. The biblical narrator, however, says that there was no גֶּשֶׁם, a word which denotes the heavy seasonal rains that the brook of Cherith would have been dependent on.⁵³⁹ With this subtle change in words, the biblical narrator clarifies for the reader that Elijah did not have an advantage over Ahab and the rest of Israel in this drought because he now lived in a place that may still receive the seasonal rain. Even the seasonal down pours that the more arid regions east of the Jordan were dependent on, had also ceased. The already arid climate that Yahweh had commanded Elijah to go to had now become even more dry and arid.

The report that the brook had dried up is not surprising in the context of Elijah’s oath that there would be no rain, but it causes the reader to ask questions concerning Yahweh’s character. The fact that this brook, Elijah’s source for water dries up, Hauser writes, shows that death’s

threat to Elijah’s life is “intensified.”⁵⁴⁰ According to him, the reader is led to question “whether Yahweh really controls the rains and the seasons, providing life where he will, or whether Yahweh, like Baal, has no power to stop the return of drought and death to the land?” The reader, he suggests, is also led to ask why the God “who commanded the ravens to supply Elijah with bread and meat” could not also “command the wadi to keep flowing?”⁵⁴¹ Thus, Hauser’s focus on how Yahweh is depicted as a polemical figure against “death” again leads him to question Yahweh’s power to sustain “life.”

While Hauser interprets this report as questioning Yahweh’s power over death, the drying up of the brook also causes the reader to question Yahweh’s promise to Elijah. Yahweh has seemingly not kept his promise to Elijah that he would “drink from the brook.” In other words, this report should not only cause the reader to question whether Yahweh has power over death to keep this brook flowing with water, but rather if or how Yahweh will keep his *promise* to Elijah to provide him water to drink—even if there is no precipitation of any kind.

With Elijah’s life now in danger from the lack of water, the biblical narrator uses the qal imperfect waw consecutive וַיִּהְיֶה, “and it happened,” again to introduce a second transitional scene in 17:8. This time, instead of reporting from his own authorial point of view, the biblical narrator uses this transitional verb to allow Yahweh to express himself with a new command and a new promise to Elijah in 17:9.⁵⁴² Yahweh commands Elijah to, “Get up, go to Zarepheth which

539 BDB, s.v. נָשַׁב.

540 Hauser, “Yahweh versus Death,” 15.

541 Ibid.

542 He tells the reader, “and it happened, the word of Yahweh was to him saying,”

(וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלָיו לֵאמֹר).

is in Sidon, and dwell there.” He then promises Elijah, “Look! I have commanded there a woman, a widow to sustain you.”

(קֹוֹם לְךָ צִרְפַּתָּה אֲשֶׁר לְצִידֹוֹן וַיִּשְׁבַּת שָׁם הַנָּה צוֹיְתִי שָׁם אִשָּׁה אֶלְמָנָה לְכַלְכֵּלְךָ:)

Just as Yahweh commanded ravens to miraculously sustain Elijah at the brook, Yahweh now reveals to the Elijah and the reader that he has commanded a widow to sustain Elijah in Zarephath.

Yahweh’s new command and new promise to Elijah show that “Yahweh’s life-giving power is reaffirmed,” Hauser writes, “in the face of a growing famine.”⁵⁴³ Likewise, Hauser’s desire to interpret Yahweh’s character as serving the polemical intent of the historical author against “death” and the Canaanite gods, Baal and Mot, is reaffirmed. Yahweh promise to now sustain Elijah with a widow counters the threat of “death,” and shows Yahweh, he writes, to be “an image of a God who is in control” even “after the threat posed by the drying up of the wadi.”⁵⁴⁴

When reading for the dialogues, however, the dialogic reader recognizes that Yahweh is not in dialogue with death, but rather he is in dialogue with Elijah and the biblical narrator’s report that the brook had “dried up.” Just as in 17:2, so also here, Yahweh’s word enters the dialogue to expresses his point of view at the mentioning of no water. Yahweh’s new command and promise indicates to the reader that Yahweh believes Elijah’s oath to Ahab will continue to hold true. There will continue to be no precipitation on the land of Israel. The dried up brook will remain dry.

⁵⁴³ Hauser, “Yahweh versus Death,” 16

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid. Hauser writes, “after the threat posed by the drying up of the wadi. . . we again have the image of a God who is in control, who has anticipated and prepared for all eventualities, and who can make things happen at his
(continued next page)

Yahweh's new word also shows the reader and Elijah that Yahweh is not just determined to defeat the threat of death in the drying up of the brook, but he is also determined to remain faithful to his promise to "sustain" Elijah.⁵⁴⁵ The rains may have ceased, and the brook may have dried up, but Yahweh has spoken again on behalf of Elijah. He has reaffirmed his promise to care for Elijah's life with another surprising means—a widow from Zarephath in Sidon. Yahweh's new command and promise for Elijah reveal Yahweh's character to be revealed more so in his relationship to Elijah than in his relationship to "death." In other words, Yahweh is shown to be more than just an "image of a God in control" over "death," as Hauser's interpretation suggests. While other people may be dying because of the drought and famine, Yahweh reassures Elijah that he is Elijah's God expressing himself with a new promise to "sustain" him, especially when Elijah is most desperate for him to do so—when there is no water.

Furthermore, Yahweh's response to Elijah's situation reaffirms that Elijah is not acting on his own, elevating his word to Yahweh's, as Tribble's deconstructive reading suggests. When the brook has dried up, Elijah is not allowed to speak. Rather, the biblical narrator allows Yahweh to speak in order to show the reader that Elijah is completely dependent on Yahweh to speak and act for him in his drought ridden world.

By allowing Yahweh to express his point of view to Elijah, the dialogic reader can also recognize that the biblical narrator invites both the reader and Elijah into dialogue about the ironic nature of Yahweh's new promise. Promising to sustain Elijah by means of a widow is odd

discretion."

⁵⁴⁵ Yahweh promises to "sustain" (from the Hebrew root כָּוַן) Elijah by means of the widow with the same word he used for his promise to "sustain" Elijah by means of ravens.

because a widow living in this time period would have no means to provide for Elijah's needs, especially during a famine.⁵⁴⁶ Promising to sustain Elijah through a *Sidonian* widow is even more surprising because of what the biblical narrator has said concerning "Sidon" in 1 Kings 16:31. Sidon is where Ethbaal, the father of Jezebel and father-in-law to Ahab, reigned as king. The reader and Elijah both know that Yahweh sent Elijah to the brook of Cherith not only to "sustain" him, but also so that Elijah could "hide." The command to go to Zarephath of Sidon causes the reader to question if Yahweh is now calling Elijah to now come out of hiding, or if Elijah is going to be hiding with this widow in an unsuspected hiding place – in the very homeland of Jezebel. Why not just send Elijah to a widow in Israel?

Yet, Yahweh's promise to sustain Elijah by means of a widow is accompanied by an important dialogic overtone – the word הִינֵה, "Look!" This *hinneh* distinguishes Yahweh's consciousness and perception from the biblical narrator's consciousness, and shows the reader that Yahweh has truly become a carrier of his own word expressing his point of view free from control of the biblical narrator's consciousness.⁵⁴⁷ It also allows Yahweh to penetrate Elijah's consciousness and point of view by calling Elijah to do more than just blindly trust his promise. He calls Elijah to actually "look" and see from Yahweh's point of view for himself that he will make good on his promise to Elijah with this widow in Zarephath that Yahweh has already apparently "commanded" to sustain him.

⁵⁴⁶ DeVries, *1 Kings*, 217. DeVries notes that a "widow woman" is the "poorest of all society."

⁵⁴⁷ Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 62–63. This Hebrew word, Adele Berlin points out, "marks the perception of a character as distinct from the narrator. It functions, she writes, "in much the same way as interior dialogue, to internalize the viewpoint; it provides a kind of 'interior vision'" Berlin points to Genesis 24:63, "And he (Isaac) lifted up his eyes and saw, and *hinneh* there were camels coming," as example of how *hinneh* moves the point of view from the narrator to the characters. Berlin writes, "The narrator and the reader had been traveling along with the camels . . . when suddenly the camera gives us a shot from a different angle—that of Isaac viewing the caravan from afar. We are told that
(continued next page)

the reader’s perspective away from his authorial point of view again with the word הִנֵּה. This time, instead of allowing one of the characters to address another character with this word, the biblical narrator uses it to directly address the reader in 17:10. In so doing, the biblical narrator moves this ancient narrative from the distant past into a *contemporary reality* for the reader by calling the reader to “Look there!” (וְהִנֵּה-שָׁם) and see what Elijah is seeing—“A woman—a widow collecting sticks” (אִשָּׁה אֹלְמָנָה מְקַשֶּׁשֶׁת עֵצִים).⁵⁴⁹ As the reader “looks” and sees this “widow,” he or she begins to anticipate how Yahweh is going to make good on his promise to “sustain” Elijah through this widow.

The biblical narrator allows the reader to then witness Elijah as more than one who just “looks” at the widow. Elijah, the biblical narrator reports in 17:10, “called to her and he said” (וַיִּקְרָא אֵלֶיהָ וַיֹּאמֶר). These words allow Elijah to speak for the first time since Elijah spoke his oath to Ahab. Elijah expresses himself to the widow by requesting a drink of water from her. “Bring to me, please, a little water in a jar so I may drink” (קַח-חֵינָא לִי מֵעֵט-מַיִם בְּכֵלִי וְאֶשְׁתֶּה), he says to the widow.⁵⁵⁰

Elijah’s request for water is obviously directed toward the widow of Zarephath, but the dialogic reader can recognize that this particular request is simultaneously in dialogue with Yahweh’s just spoken promise. Although the biblical narrator did not allow Elijah to respond directly to Yahweh’s word in the previous scene, Elijah’s request to the widow takes a sideward

⁵⁴⁹ Bakhtin, “Epic and Novel,” 39. Novelistic discourse, Bakhtin writes, shows “the object of artistic representation” with a “*contemporary reality* that was inconclusive and fluid.” The narrative, is thus, “structured not in the distanced image of the absolute past but in the zone of direct contact with the inconclusive present-day reality.”

⁵⁵⁰ The particle אֵן, Waltke and O’Connor point out in §34.7, “is generally known as a precative particle and translated into English by ‘please.’”

glance towards Yahweh's call for him to "look" at the widow who will sustain him. Elijah does not directly acknowledge or quote Yahweh's promise for him to the widow, but his request for water shows the reader that he believes that Yahweh's promise to sustain him by means of a widow will be fulfilled.

As the biblical narrator gave a fulfillment report in the previous scene of how ravens sustained Elijah, so now the reader expects the biblical narrator to inform the reader that this second promise to sustain Elijah was fulfilled, perhaps with a report such as, "the widow went and took a little water in a jar and brought it to Elijah and he drank the water." The biblical narrator begins such a report, but ends it in a rather terse and abrupt way. He simply reports in 17:11 that the widow "went to get" (וַתֵּלֶךְ לְקַחַת). Although this report is incomplete, the reader is able to sense the widow's response to Elijah's request is similar to the ravens' and Elijah's response to Yahweh's commands—a quiet action of obedience.

The fact that this Sidonian woman "went to get" Elijah some water shows that she must be different from the other Sidonian woman mentioned in the Elijah narratives, Jezebel. Jezebel is rich, royal, married and seeks to kill Elijah. This Sidonian woman of Zarephath, on the other hand, is poor and widowed, and yet, she responds to Elijah's request for water. While the reader does not know much about this woman yet, the small utterance from the biblical narrator that "she went to get" implies that she is a very hospitable and giving woman.

When the reader hears the next report in 17:11 that Elijah "called to her and said" (וַיֹּאמֶר) (וַיִּקְרָא אֵלֶיהָ) a second time, he or she begins to understand the reason why the biblical narrator stopped the first report with "she went to take." This second report shows Elijah interrupting the widow's action of getting him a drink of water, and also the biblical narrator interrupting his own report about the widow's response, which also interrupts the reader's attention from the widow's

action. It is as if the biblical narrator is reporting to the reader from the very scene of Zarephath, and as if the biblical narrator intended to complete his initial report that the widow “went to get” with the words “a little water in a jar for Elijah to drink,” but as he heard Elijah speak towards the widow again, he interrupts himself with the play by play of Elijah’s second address to the widow.

Elijah interrupts the widow from getting him a drink of water in order to make a second request of her. “Bring for me, please, a piece of bread in your hand” (נָא לִי פֶתַח לֶחֶם בְּיָדְךָ (לְקַחֵי), he says to her in 17:11. This second request, like his first request for a drink of water, is a response that takes a sideward glance at Yahweh’s promise to sustain him by a widow. By requesting a piece of bread, Elijah shows that he believes Yahweh’s promise will be to sustain him not only with water, but with bread as well through this widow, just as the ravens did when he was living at the brook of Cherith. The reader again expects the biblical narrator to now give fulfillment reports that show the widow provided Elijah with water to drink and bread to eat, such as, “and she went and got a jar of water and a piece of bread in her hand and she returned and she gave the jar of water and the piece of bread to Elijah” and that “Elijah drank from the jar of water and he ate the piece of bread.”

Elijah’s second request may be trusting glance at Yahweh’s word, but it is a penetrative word to this Sidonian widowed mother. It compels her to respond by expressing her own point of view in 17:12. She begins her response with an oath formula. This Sidonian widow, however, does not use the typical Canaanite speech genre, “Alive is the mighty one, Baal,” that Bronner’s

Ancient Near Eastern study identified.⁵⁵¹ Instead, she interestingly uses the same typical Hebrew oath introductory formula that Elijah spoke to Ahab, “Yahweh is alive!” (חַי־יְהוָה).

The irony of this Canaanite woman uttering an Israelite confession causes the reader to ask questions. Does this Sidonian widow utter these words because she also worships Yahweh? Is that why Yahweh sent Elijah to her? Or, does this Sidonian widow utter these words because she knows that Elijah is an Israelite and she has chosen to use one of his speech genres in her response to his request? Moreover, does this widow know specifically who Elijah is – the man who uttered the oath that brought the drought and famine to her land?

Although the widow begins her oath in the same way Elijah did, she does not confess Yahweh as “the God of Israel,” nor does she confess that she “serves him” as Elijah confessed. Instead, she re-accentuates this typical Hebrew introductory oath formula for her own purpose (as Elijah also did), first, by saying Yahweh is “your God” (אֱלֹהֶיךָ), meaning Elijah’s God.⁵⁵² This second utterance of the widow’s speech expression, which has never been heard before by the experienced biblical reader within this Hebrew oath formula, invites the reader to ask more questions about the unfinalized consciousness of this widow towards Yahweh.

Is the widow’s re-accentuation explicitly confessing that Yahweh is *not her* God? In other words, does the widow intend to say something like, “Yahweh is alive!—who, by the way, is *your* God, not my God!” in a sarcastic tone. Or is the widow simply showing that she recognizes that Yahweh is Elijah’s God because she recognizes that he is an Israelite? At this point, the

⁵⁵¹ See Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha*, 74–75.

⁵⁵² Obadiah utters this same re-accentuation in 1 Kings 18:10. He says to Elijah, “Yahweh lives!—your God.” He obviously is not intending to reject that Yahweh is God. He is trying to persuade Elijah to believe what the biblical narrator believes about him – that he is a “devout believer in Yahweh.”

widow's consciousness towards Yahweh remains uncertain, but her usage of this Hebrew oath formula and her re-accentuation of it with the particular words, "your God," imply that she at least recognizes that Elijah is an Israelite who worships Yahweh as his God.

The widow then shows that she is allowed to truly express her own point of view, un-objectified by the biblical narrator and his authorial control (as Elijah was able to in his oath to Ahab), as she speaks to the circumstances of her life. "There is not to me any loaf, except only a palm full of flower in a jar and a little oil in a jug," she tells Elijah (בְּכֶרֶד וּמִעֵט-שֶׁמֶן בַּצִּפְחָת) (אִם-יִשְׁלִי מִעוֹג כִּי אִם-מִלֵּא כֶּף-קֶמַח).⁵⁵³ The widow's point of view penetrates Elijah's point of view with what the drought has done to her ability to feed her and her son. As Yahweh was sustaining Elijah by the brook with ravens, this widow and her son have been slowly moving towards starvation and death.

Then, as Yahweh called Elijah to "look" at the widow who would sustain him, this widow also calls Elijah to "Look!" (וְהִנְנִי) and understand from her point of view why she can not get him a piece of bread. "Look, I am collecting two sticks and I will go and I will make it (a loaf of bread) for me and for my son and we shall eat it and we shall die,"

(וְהִנְנִי מִקְשֶׁשֶׁת שְׁנַיִם עֵצִים וּבָאתִי וַעֲשִׂיתִיהוּ לִי וּלְבְנִי וְאֶכְלֶנָהּ וּמָתוּ) she exclaims to Elijah.

As the biblical narrator allows this widow to speak her own point of view in response to Elijah's second request, he allows the reader to see her struggle with how she will feed Elijah and her son with the remaining flour and oil in her jars. In other words, by explaining her circumstances to Elijah, her response shows her relationship to Elijah and his discourse to be different from

⁵⁵³ Hauser, "Yahweh versus Death," 17. Hauser interprets the widow's oath as sarcastic because of the widow's description of her dire circumstances. He writes, "The words, however, have a sarcastic twist, as becomes immediately obvious when the widow goes on to describe in vivid detail the meager rations she has left."

Elijah's relationship to Yahweh and his discourse. If not sarcastic, her answer seems to be a desperate cry for help. "My son and I are about to die! What am I supposed to do?" she seems to say.

Given the choice to sustain this foreigner or her son with the last of her flour and oil, the widow seems to suggest to Elijah and to the reader that she will choose to feed herself and her son. Yahweh may have promised to sustain Elijah, but this widow has called Elijah's word into question. "Are you expecting me to choose to feed you instead of my son?" the widow seems to ask Elijah. Thus, while death threatens the lives of Elijah, the widow, and her son in the plot of the narrative at the mentioning that there is not enough bread for all three to eat, dialogic life exhibits its power over monologic death as the biblical narrator allows this widow to question Elijah's request for bread.

The widow's response to Elijah's request leads Hauser to ask questions concerning the relationship of this widow to Yahweh. If Yahweh is the God of life, he writes, then this widow's words imply that "she certainly has not enjoyed the benefit of his provisions." Moreover, her final words, according to him, "show that she has no confidence at all in Yahweh's power to sustain life, since she anticipates that she and her son will die."⁵⁵⁴ For Hauser, the widow's response to Elijah's request for bread calls "Yahweh's power of life" into question and "stresses the power of the threat of death" within the plot of this narrative.⁵⁵⁵ Thus, Hauser's intent on showing that these narratives are a polemic against "death," again leads him to prioritize

⁵⁵⁴ Hauser, "Yahweh versus Death," 17.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid. This scene, Hauser writes, "moves rapidly from a seeming assertion of Yahweh's power as the God of life, to words which seriously call that power into question . . . This final, piercing word by the widow stresses the power of the threat of death. God's power to sustain life has thus been seriously challenged."

Yahweh's apparent crisis in relationship to this widow and the threat of death over his power of life instead of Elijah's crisis in relationship to Yahweh and his promise.

The widow's response to Elijah's request may have the reader continue to question this widow's consciousness towards Yahweh, as Hauser suggests, but the dialogic reader is also led to question how her response further reveals Elijah's character in relationship of this widow and to Yahweh. The widow's response to Elijah's request for bread is puzzling, not because she may be questioning Yahweh's power to sustain life, but because her desire to feed her son seems to question Yahweh's promise to sustain Elijah through this widow in Zarephath. Yahweh even had Elijah "look" and see from his point of view that a widow would sustain him. Is this not the same widow who Yahweh told Elijah he commanded to "sustain" him? Or is she aware of Yahweh's command to her to sustain Elijah, but has now decided to act against it, challenging Yahweh's promise to Elijah, in order to feed her son one last time?

The reader is not quite sure how to answer these questions at this point, but the biblical narrator allows Elijah to reveal how he is consciousness of the widow and of Yahweh's promise to him by responding to the widow's struggle with his own point of view in 17: 13–14.⁵⁵⁶ He responds to the widow and her struggle with his own penetrating word by calling the widow into relationship with Yahweh, as he is in relationship to Yahweh—through his promise to sustain.⁵⁵⁷ He begins his response by acknowledging the widow's dire circumstances, but he does not draw

⁵⁵⁶ By again telling the reader that Elijah "said to her" (וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ).

⁵⁵⁷ See Bakhtin, *Problems in Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 242, 249. The penetrated word, Bakhtin writes, is a word "capable of actively and confidently interfering in the interior dialogue of the other person, helping that person to find his own voice." The penetrated word happens only in a dialogue when one person calls another to merge his or her voice with his or her own. On the level of Dostoevsky's religious ideology, Bakhtin pointed out, "this meant to join the chorus and proclaim with them, 'Hosanna!'"

back from his request for her to bring him bread. In fact, Elijah increases the dialogic tension between him and this widow by giving her six imperative utterances in 17:13:

1. “do not be afraid” (אל־תִּירָאִי)
2. “Go!” (בֹּאִי)
3. “do as your word” (עֲשֵׂי כְדִבְרֶךָ)
4. “but make for me from there a small bread cake first”
(אֲךָ עֲשֵׂי לִי מִשָּׁם עֵגֶה קְטַנָּה בְּרֹאשְׁנָה)
5. “and bring it to me.” (וְהוֹצֵאתָ לִי)
6. “Then for you and your son you will make afterward.” (וְלָךְ וְלִבְנֶךָ תַעֲשִׂי בְאַחֲרָיִךְ)

Some readers may become angry or frustrated with Elijah’s seemingly insensitive and rude commanding discourse towards this widow and her dire circumstances. They may wonder why Elijah will not allow the widow to make the bread and feed her son, and then trust that there will be bread left over for him to eat. The experienced biblical reader, however, will see that Elijah’s first imperative, “Do not fear,” are filled with dialogic promise. These are words already spoken by other biblical characters calling women, like this widow, to trust in the same God of Israel to provide for their families. The Angel of God told Hagar, “Do not fear,” in Genesis 21:17 when she worried how she would care for her son, Ishmael. Boaz spoke these same words to Ruth in Ruth 3:11, when she was concerned about caring for herself and her mother-in-law, Naomi. Elijah shows himself to be in dialogue with these other biblical characters and their discourses as he re-accentuates their promising words for his own purpose, calling the widow to trust in the God of Israel to provide for her and her son.

Moreover, Elijah’s penetrative word adds a specific promise for the widow and her son in 17:14 from Yahweh himself. The reader did not hear Yahweh speak, but Elijah informs the widow, “thus Yahweh the God of Israel has spoken” (כִּי כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל). He then incorporates Yahweh’s apparently spoken promise into his discourse for the widow, as he tells

the widow that the flour (הַקֶּמַח) and the oil (הַשֶּׁמֶן) will not run out until the day that Yahweh sends rain upon the face of the earth. Although the biblical narrator never allowed the reader to hear Yahweh speak these words, Elijah's stylization of Yahweh's promise implies that he has heard Yahweh speak them.

Elijah's discourse reveals that he now believes that the promise Yahweh made to him is not just for him alone, but it is also a promise that Yahweh has spoken for the widow and her son. It also calls the widow to do more than just respond to his request for bread. Elijah calls the widow to now trust in Yahweh, the God of Israel, who alone is able to "sustain" her and her son. Elijah's penetrating word, in affect, calls the widow to see her response to his request as not a choice to feed Elijah over her son, but rather as a response of faith in the promise of Yahweh's "sustaining" word. In other words, Elijah calls the widow to believe that Yahweh is not just his God, or Israel's God, but also her God and her son's God.

The narrator reports in 17:15 that the widow "went and she did just as the word of Elijah" (וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתַּעֲשֶׂה כְּדִבְרֵי אֱלֹהֶיךָ). With this report, the biblical narrator is careful again to remain on the boundary of the widow and not transcend her consciousness by telling the reader what she was thinking. Yet, the reader can see that by acknowledging and incorporating Yahweh's words of promise into his own speech for the widow, Elijah has caused the widow to move past her fear of how she was going to feed her son and believe in Yahweh's promise spoken through Elijah.

This narrative scene ends in 17:15–16 with the biblical narrator taking control of the narrative discourse again by using the qal imperfect waw consecutive verb form to report how Yahweh's promise spoken "by the hand of Elijah" was fulfilled. The widow and her house "ate" (וַתֹּאכְלֶינָה), for "days" (יָמִים), the biblical narrator reports. The narrator then reports that "the jar of

flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not diminish just as the word of Yahweh which was spoken by the hand of Elijah.”

(כִּדְבַר הַקְּמוּחַ לֹא כָלְתָה וְצִפְחַת הַשֶּׁמֶן לֹא חָסַר כְּדִבְרֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר בְּיַד אֱלִיָּהוּ)

It is this mentioning that Yahweh’s word was spoken “*by the hand* of Elijah” in this fulfillment report that leads Tribler to unmask what she sees to be the biblical narrator’s intent of showing the widow “joining hands” with Elijah. Tribler’s deconstructive interpretation suggests that the biblical narrator is trying to make a connection between the widow’s feeding of Elijah and Yahweh’s feeding of the widow. Both happened, according to her, “by the hand.” Tribler mentions nothing of the widow’s initial response and struggle with Elijah’s request for bread, but rather oversimplifies this widow as someone who brought Elijah “water in a vessel and a morsel of bread ‘in her hand.’”⁵⁵⁸ Thus, the widow, according to Tribler, does what Jezebel will not do. She “joins hands” with Elijah in order to further the goal of the “Deuteronomists” in depicting Jezebel as “evil.”⁵⁵⁹

The dialogic reader, however, recognizes that the widow does not just “join hands” with Elijah, as Tribler suggests. The widow did not just quietly respond to Elijah’s second request and bring him bread as the ravens responded to Yahweh’s similar command to them. Moreover, biblical narrator never mentions that Elijah was “*fed by the hand*” of the widow, as Tribler’s deconstructive reading suggests. In fact, the biblical narrator’s fulfillment report shifts the

⁵⁵⁸ Tribler, “Exegesis for Storytellers,” 5, writes, “Then the word sends him ironically to Sidon, to Jezebel’s own land, where a widow brings him water in a vessel and a morsel of bread ‘in her hand.’”

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid. “All happens,” Tribler writes, “according to the word of YHWH which he spoke by the hand of Elijah. Thus Elijah and widow join ‘hands.’ This Phoenician woman does what Jezebel will not. She obeys Elijah; she ministers to him.”

reader's attention away from Elijah's insistence on being fed by the widow's "hand," and does not even mention Elijah's eating.

Bronner and Hauser also flatten Elijah and the widow by interpreting this fulfillment report as simply showing Yahweh's power of life as a polemic against the Canaanite gods. The miracle of the "meal and oil" being increased for the widow, according to Bronner, as all of the miracles Elijah or Yahweh perform, speak against the Canaanite belief that Baal is the "dispenser of all these blessings."⁵⁶⁰ Hauser, likewise, posits that this fulfillment report shows that "Yahweh still possesses his power to maintain life in the face of death."⁵⁶¹

Bronner and Hauser, like Tribble, miss how this fulfillment report reveals Yahweh's consciousness to Elijah and this widow, as it directs the reader's attention to how Yahweh was faithful to his promise. Although he allowed the brook to dry up, and although the widow "he commanded" to sustain Elijah questioned Elijah's request for bread at first, Yahweh has been shown to be a God who is miraculously faithful to his promise. He has now begun to sustain Elijah by means of this widow of Zarephath even though she does not have the means to do so. As a result, Elijah continues to live on the boundary of Yahweh's consciousness by obeying Yahweh's commands and trusting in Yahweh's promises, and by doing so, he receives the benefits of Yahweh's promise to sustain him.

The biblical narrator has also revealed to the reader that this widow believed Yahweh's promise spoken by Elijah, and that Yahweh has shown himself to be a God who cares for more than just Elijah. Yahweh has now become faithful to his promise to care for this widow and her

⁵⁶⁰ See Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha*, 83, 140.

⁵⁶¹ Hauser, "Yahweh versus Death," 18.

son in this drought ridden dead world.⁵⁶² If Elijah and Yahweh are characters who oppose Jezebel, it is not because she is “foreign” and “female,” as Tribble suggest, but rather because she does not believe in Yahweh, the God of Israel, as this widow from Zarephath now apparently does.

As this scene comes to an end, the reader can see how the biblical narrator continues to bring dialogic life into this once monologically dead world by allowing these characters to be more than just functions of plot, polemics, or ideology. The dialogic reader can see the complexities of these characters as he or she has begun to interpret how these characters are conscious of themselves and of each other. This biblical narrator did not just monologically finalize the widow as a compliant and obedient responder to Elijah’s request, but allowed the widow remain unfinalizable and evolving on the boundary of Elijah, questioning his request for bread in the context of the growing drought and famine of her world. Yet, by allowing Elijah to express himself on the boundary of this widow, the biblical narrator has allowed the reader to see how Elijah’s point of view called this “foreign” and “female” widow, and her son, to believe in the sustaining promises of Yahweh, the God of Israel, as he has, and to likewise receive the benefits of his promise – never ending oil and flour. Thus, the biblical narrator’s discourse and the dialogic interaction of these two characters have addressed the reader’s consciousness in a very real, unfinalizable, and evolving way.

iv. I Kings 17:17–24: Elijah and the Widow Set Apart for Ultimate Dialogic Life. The last narrative scene of this chapter begins in 17:17 with a temporal clause, “after these things”

⁵⁶² DeVries, *I Kings*, 218, writes, “The marvel is that God gave her (the widow) faith sufficient to believe his assurance and his prophecy – but that God who can direct ravens to bring food in a desolate wadi can surely create faith in this widow’s heart. To the miracle of faith, Yahweh adds the miracle of a never-empty jar of meal and a never-failing cruse of oil.”

(אָהַרְתָּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה). The biblical narrator reports from his point of view in good narrative fashion, as he again uses the qal imperfect waw consecutive third person singular verb וַיְהִי (“and it happened”). The biblical narrator informs the reader that the widow’s son became sick (חָלָהּ), and that his sickness strengthened “until no breath remained in him” (אֲשֶׁר לֹא-נִוְתַרְהָ-בּוֹ נְשָׁמָה).⁵⁶³ This is an unbelievably ironic and tragic report in the immediate context of the closing report from the previous narrative scene that informed the reader how Yahweh had miraculously provided never ending flour and oil for the widow and her son as he had promised.

The irony of this report, again, invites the reader into dialogue. The “vivid picture” of the sick boy ceasing to breathe, according to Hauser, shows the writer stressing “the power and impact of the challenge death poses to Yahweh.”⁵⁶⁴ This may be true when reading for plot and polemics, as Hauser does, but the death of the widow’s son also causes the dialogic reader to again question more than Yahweh’s power over death. The dialogic reader is compelled by this report to question Yahweh’s relationship to the widow and her son and his word spoken “by the hand of Elijah.” Yahweh’s word implied that he would not just keep the oil and flour flowing, but that he would “sustain” the widow and her son as he promised to “sustain” Elijah. Why

⁵⁶³ DeVries, *I Kings*, 221, suggests that this “woman” is not the widow of Zarephath, but for no good reason. The phrase, “the woman of the house בַּעֲלַת הַבַּיִת” shows that there was no “man” of the house. Furthermore, the Hebrew text places definite articles within the utterance, “the son of the woman,” implying this is the same “son” of the widow in the previous scene. Elijah also calls the woman of this final scene a “widow” in his speech to Yahweh in 17:20. Thus, this woman could easily be the widow from Zarephath. In both scenes the woman has a single son – most likely because it is the same woman. There is nothing in the text that would disqualify this woman from being the same widow of Zarephath.

⁵⁶⁴ Hauser, “Yahweh versus Death,” 19.

would Yahweh promise to miraculously provide food for the widow and her son if he was not going to spare the widow's son from this deathly sickness?⁵⁶⁵

This report also causes the reader to question Yahweh's relationship to Elijah and the promise he made to sustain him. Yahweh is not the only one in crisis against the power of death, as Hauser suggests. Elijah is now in crisis in his relationship to this widow to whom he spoke Yahweh's sustaining promise. Was the word that Elijah spoke to the widow really Yahweh's word? The biblical narrator said it was. How is Yahweh going to continue to sustain Elijah now through this widow if he did not fulfill his promise to sustain her son?

The reader is not the only one who has questions. The widow responds to the biblical narrator's report that there was no breath left in her son by expressing herself to Elijah once more.⁵⁶⁶ The widow's frustration towards Elijah is evident as she speaks her own penetrating word towards Elijah. "What do you have against me oh man of God? You have come to me to cause (me) to remember my sin and to cause the death of my son!" (אֶת־עֹנִי וְלִהְמוֹת אֶת־בְּנִי) (מה־לִּי וְלָךְ אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים בָּאתָ אֵלַי לְהִזְכִּיר (וְתֹאמַר אֵל־אֱלֹהֶיךָ)). the widow exclaims. The widow's penetrating word is, interestingly, not aimed towards the sickness or towards Yahweh and his lack of ability to sustain the boy's life against the increasing sickness. It is aimed against Elijah. Her words, "What do you have against me?" and her accusation that Elijah caused the death of her son show that this widow is not merely struggling with Elijah as she did when he requested bread. She is now angry with Elijah because she believes he caused her son's death.

⁵⁶⁵ This question reminds the reader of when the biblical narrator reported that the brook had dried up. "Why would Yahweh allow the brook to dry up after he promised to sustain Elijah by drinking from the book?"

⁵⁶⁶ The biblical narrator informs the reader that the widow "said to Elijah" (וְתֹאמַר אֵל־אֱלֹהֶיךָ).

The reader can also sense that the widow's choice to address Elijah as "man of God" (אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים) is not an address meant to flatter Elijah, but rather a parodic barb against Elijah. This title, which has been used to describe a number of men in the biblical narrative, usually acknowledges someone who acts and speaks authoritatively on behalf of God.⁵⁶⁷ The widow incorporates this already learned speech genre into her own individual expression, not to question *if* Elijah is truly a "man of God," but rather to question *how* this "man of God" is for her.⁵⁶⁸ By using this title as a barb, the widow shows that she assumes that Elijah stands against her and her son as a "man of God." She also shows that she questions the integrity of Elijah's word, which promised continual flour and oil not just so she and her son could eat, but so they could live. Now that her son is dead, Yahweh's promise to sustain, from the widow's point of view, is not good for her and her son.

The biblical narrator could have simply reported to the reader what the widow was thinking concerning *why* a "man of God" is against her and *why* he would cause her son to die (אֶת-בְּנִי וּלְהַמִּית). Yet, he allows the widow to express herself in good dialogic fashion, as to why she thinks Elijah caused this tragedy in her life. It must be because of "my sin (אֶת-עֲוֹנִי)," she assumes aloud, which you are "causing" me "to remember" (לְהִזְכִּיר), she accuses Elijah. In other words, Elijah may have spoken Yahweh's promise of sustaining her bread, but the widow's

⁵⁶⁷ See Wiseman's commentary concerning the phrase, "man of God" in Wiseman, *I and II Kings*, 142–43. Wiseman suggests this phrase is synonymous to the word "prophet." This phrase is used in 1 Kings for Elijah and Elisha twenty-eight times and also for Shemaiah and the un-named "man of God" in 1 Kings 13. It is also used for Moses, David, and the Angel of God who foretold of Samson's birth in Judges 13. The "common characteristic," Wiseman writes, "is that the men spoke authoritatively and were known as those whose words came true."

⁵⁶⁸ The widow seems to say, "You may be a man of God, but you are not a man of God for me!"

response to her sons' death shows that she believes that his death and her consequent suffering is a punishment that has come as a result of her sin.

More specifically, she believes that Elijah is a “man of God” who has been sent to punish her with the death of her son because of her sin. Standing in the presence of Elijah in the previous scene, with the threat of death in the near future, the widow was moved to believe in the Yahweh's sustaining promises and to receive the benefits of his promises – never ending bread. Standing before Elijah in this scene, however, with the stench of death in her house, this widow is brought to inconsolable grief, not just because of the death of her son, but also because of the guilt and shame of her sin.⁵⁶⁹

Elijah responds to the widow's penetrating word in 17:19 in the same way he responded to her struggle towards his request for a piece of bread, with an imperative. He commands her saying, “Give your son to me” (תְּנֵה־לִי אֶת־בְּנֶךָ). The biblical narrator does not allow the widow to respond to this command with words or actions, but rather moves the narrative along from his point of view with three imperfect waw consecutives in 17:19, which inform the reader of Elijah's actions. Elijah “took him” (וַיִּקְחֵהוּ) from the widow's bosom, Elijah “took him up” (וַיַּעֲלֵהוּ) to the upper room where he was staying, and Elijah then “laid him” (וַיִּשְׁכְּבֵהוּ) on the bed. It is in this “upper room” that Elijah is allowed to address Yahweh for the first time with his own point of view, as he says in 17:20, “Oh Yahweh my God, have you caused evil even upon the widow whom I am sojourning to cause her son to die?” (עֲמָה הָרְעוֹת לְהַמִּית אֶת־בְּנָהּ)

⁵⁶⁹ Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elijah*, 120, writes that “here too we see the widespread belief . . . that suffering comes as punishment for sin.

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הַגִּם עַל־הָאֱלֹמָנָה אֲשֶׁר־אֲנִי מְתַגְדָּר (יהוה אלהי הגם על-האלמנה אשר-אני מתגדר).⁵⁷⁰ This first address of Elijah to Yahweh shows itself to be an intense one, as he blames Yahweh for the death of the widow's son.

Hauser points out that Elijah's address to Yahweh here shows him to be like the widow, seeing death not "as a separate force which can challenge Yahweh's power and perhaps even his life, as in the case of the Baal legend," but rather as "a tool of Yahweh which he uses as he will."⁵⁷¹ The widow's and Elijah's speech expressions, thus for him, are used by the writer to ultimately "emphasize Yahweh's power over death and life."⁵⁷² Although Elijah, like the widow, does not blame the sickness or "death" for killing her son, Hauser fails to point out how Elijah's address to Yahweh is different from the widow's address of Elijah. The widow blamed Elijah for her son's death. Elijah has now blamed Yahweh, his God, for killing the widow's son.

Hauser also flattens these two characters and their speech expressions as functions of the writer's intent to show "Yahweh's power over death and life." Neither the widow, nor Elijah questioned Yahweh's "power over death and life." The widow questioned her son's death and her suffering in relationship to Elijah as someone who has come to punish her for her sin. Elijah's blaming of Yahweh for the boy's death questioned Yahweh's promises to sustain the widow, her son, and Elijah.

Although he does not reference Yahweh's promise to the widow, Elijah takes a sideward glance at that very promise of Yahweh made to the widow by asking, "Have you *even* brought evil upon the widow whom I am *sojourning*?" This sideward glance is significant in revealing

⁵⁷⁰ The biblical narrator reports, "Elijah called to Yahweh and he said" (וַיִּקְרָא אֶל־יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר). This is no insignificant report. Up to this point, Yahweh has spoken his word to Elijah and to the widow through Elijah, but no one has been allowed to speak their point of view directly to Yahweh.

⁵⁷¹ Hauser, "Yahweh versus God," 19

⁵⁷² Ibid.

the complexities of Elijah's character to the reader. Elijah's mentioning that he is a "sojourner" among this widow and her son reveals an important aspect to Elijah's consciousness about the widow. From his point of view, this woman has shown nothing but hospitality to him by feeding him and giving him a place to stay. In other words, Elijah seems to say, "This woman has been caring for me and my needs. She has sacrificed to sustain me at your command. Why, oh Yahweh, my God, would you allow this hospitable woman's son to die?"

This sideward glance also reveals, thus, also reveals how Elijah is conscious towards Yahweh. These words show him to be struggling with Yahweh as his God, which is quite surprising. Elijah has not been shown to struggle with Yahweh and his word at all throughout this chapter, even when he was commanded to hide in the wilderness, even when he was told that birds would feed him, even when the water from the brook, which he was promised to drink from dried up, even when the widow whom Yahweh had promised would sustain him questioned his request for bread. Now, however, the first time that Elijah is allowed to address Yahweh, he shows himself to be like the widow, struggling with Yahweh. He does not question Yahweh's presence or strength, but rather Yahweh's faithfulness to his promise. "How could you allow this to happen?" he in effect asks Yahweh, "You promised to care for this widow and her son."

The report of his following actions and his next speech expression, however, reveal that although Elijah is struggling with Yahweh's promise, he still has faith in Yahweh as his "God." The reader may desire for Yahweh to answer Elijah's question, but the biblical narrator, instead, decides to answer his question first with a report in 17:21 of Elijah's actions towards the *dead* boy. Elijah "stretched himself out upon the boy three times (וַיִּתְמַדֵּד עַל-הַיָּלֵד שְׁלֹשׁ פְּעָמַיִם)," according to the biblical narrator, and then spoke again to Yahweh concerning the dead boy (וַיִּקְרָא אֶל-יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר). This time Elijah does not question Yahweh, but rather calls him to

action with a penetrating word saying, “Oh Yahweh, my God, please return the life of the boy within him” (יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי תִשָּׁבַב נַפְשׁ־הַיֶּלֶד הַזֶּה עַל־קִרְבּוֹ).

Elijah again addresses Yahweh as “my God,” reaffirming his personal faith in Yahweh as his God. He then calls to Yahweh to act in resuscitating the boy’s life. By calling Yahweh to do this, Elijah shows that he does not just blame Yahweh for the boy’s death, he also trusts in Yahweh’s promise to sustain the widow and her son – even after the widow’s son has died. Although Elijah has revealed his struggling conscious towards Yahweh’s promise because of the death of the widow’s son, Elijah’s second address to Yahweh shows that Elijah still believes that Yahweh is not just the God who creates and sustains life, but he is the God who is faithful to his promises. Elijah’s second address shows that he trusts in Yahweh to be faithful to his promise, even when it looks like he has not or will not be faithful. He now expects Yahweh to show himself to be such a God for the widow and her son.

As the biblical narrator allows Elijah to speak on the boundary of the widow and on the boundary of Yahweh, he shows Elijah to be a character who does more than just responds in trusting action to Yahweh’s incredible and unbelievable promises. Elijah has now been revealed to be one who struggles with Yahweh’s promise when his promise has been threatened, but also as one who calls Yahweh in faith to act in ways that remain faithful to his promise. Elijah is, thus, shown to be an evolving and unfinalizable character in relationship to Yahweh and his word.

Yahweh, again, is surprisingly not allowed to answer Elijah’s command with his own words. Instead, the biblical narrator answers Elijah’s request with a report in 17:22 of Yahweh’s actions. “Yahweh heard the voice of Elijah and the life of the boy returned within him and he lived” (וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹל אֱלִיָּהוּ וַתִּשָּׁב נַפְשׁ־הַיֶּלֶד עַל־קִרְבּוֹ וַיֵּחִי), he informs the reader. The

biblical narrator's report shows Yahweh, for the first time, Yahweh responding directly to someone else's word. Yahweh, the reader is told, complied with Elijah's request to return the boy's life.

This report, though, is different from how the biblical narrator reported the obedient responses of Elijah and the widow to the requests and commands they received. The biblical narrator does not say that Yahweh "did as the word of Elijah" as he reported that Elijah "did as the word of Yahweh" in response to Yahweh's command, and as he reported concerning how the widow responded to Elijah's request. Perhaps the biblical narrator does not want to give the impression that Yahweh obeys commands from humans as humans obey commands from him.

By reporting that Yahweh answered Elijah's request to return the boy's life, the biblical narrator does show the reader that Yahweh is the God who has power over life and death, as Bronner and Hauser suggest.⁵⁷³ Their interpretations of this scene, however, miss how Yahweh's actions reveal how Yahweh is conscious of Elijah, the widow, and her son. Yahweh shows that he desires to sustain the widow and her son with more than just bread and water. He desires to sustain their life, and in so doing, Yahweh shows himself to be not just a God of life, but a God who is faithful to his promise spoken to the widow.

Yahweh also shows himself to be a God who desires to sustain Elijah with more than just bread and water. He desires to sustain Elijah's relationship to the widow and her son, and in so doing, he shows himself to be a God who is faithful to his promise spoken to Elijah. More than

⁵⁷³ See again Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha*, 120, where she says that "act of resuscitation" shows that Elijah is God's instrument for giving or taking life." See also p. 140, where she says that all the miracles including "restoring the dead to life," undermine the Canaanite belief in Baal. Hauser, "Yahweh versus Death," 20, writes, "Both Elijah's praying to Yahweh and Yahweh's granting of Elijah's request to restore the lad's life focus attention on Yahweh's powerful control over death."

this, by returning the boy's life at Elijah's request, he shows that he is a God who responds to those who call him by faith in his promise to be faithful to his promise.

The biblical narrator brings this scene to a close in good symmetrical fashion by reporting that "Elijah took the boy" and "he went down" from the upper room and "he gave him to his mother" (ויקח אליהו את־היָלֵד וירדהוּ מן־העֲלִיָּהּ הַבַּיִתָּה וַיִּתְּנֶהוּ לְאִמּוֹ). The biblical narrator then allows Elijah to express himself to the widow one last time as he hands the living boy back to his mother with another penetrating word. "See your son is alive!" (אַלְיָהוּ רָאִי חַי בְּנֶךְךָ), Elijah exclaims.

Elijah's expression brings to the reader's mind how Elijah and the widow both began their oaths, which confessed "Yahweh is alive!" While Hauser understands the significance of Elijah's words to the widow and the preceding introductory oath formulas as important to understanding the polemic motif of Yahweh showing his power over death, the dialogic reader recognizes how the words Elijah speaks to the widow in this last scene reveal how Elijah is conscious of Yahweh and his promise on the boundary of this widow.⁵⁷⁴ Elijah's penetrating words and action call the widow to see and believe that because Yahweh is a God who has made a promise to her and her son and has been faithful in keeping that promise, that Yahweh is the one God who truly lives, and consequently, so now also her son lives.

As the sight of her dead son caused the widow to express her anger and frustration to Elijah, the widow now "sees" that her son is alive and she is caused to express herself to him again. "Now this I know, that you are a man of God, and the word of Yahweh in your mouth is

⁵⁷⁴ Hauser, "Yahweh Verses Death," 21. "These words directly echo the words of Elijah and the widow, "Yahweh lives," Hauser writes, and they emphasize "Yahweh's power as a God of life."

truth! (עֵתָהּ זֶה יָדַעְתִּי כִּי אִישׁ אֱלֹהִים אַתָּה וּדְבַר־יְהוָה בְּפִיךָ אֱמֶת),” she says. As the widow showed herself to evolve on the boundary of Elijah’s consciousness in the previous scene when he requested bread from her, this expression to Elijah also shows the widow to be a character that changes and evolves in dialogue on the boundary of Elijah. Her sorrow has turned to joy. Her anger towards Elijah has turned to gratitude. Instead of viewing Elijah as a “man of God” sent by Yahweh to punish her for her sin, she now views Elijah as a “man of God” sent by Yahweh to sustain her through his promises.

Trible’s deconstructive interpretation of the widow’s response to Elijah’s words and her living son, however, oversimplifies the widow and her relationship to Elijah. She acknowledges that the widow viewed Elijah as an “agent of death, convicting her of her sin,” but then because she “deems him a ‘man of God,’” Trible uses her character and her words to deconstruct what she sees as the Deuteronomistic strategy to show Jezebel as “evil.”⁵⁷⁵ This widow, according to her, simply “does what Jezebel will not. She affirms Elijah and his god.”⁵⁷⁶

As Trible points out, however, “Those who deconstruct find themselves deconstructed.”⁵⁷⁷ In this case, it is the evolution of this widow’s consciousness on the boundary of Elijah and Yahweh, which Trible ignores, that deconstructs Trible’s interpretation showing her to be a mere “storyteller” of, or a “stranger” to the text (as the title of her article implies). By oversimplifying this widow as someone who merely “does what Jezebel will not” in affirming “Elijah and his god,” she misses how the widow and Elijah both struggle with the death of the boy and with Yahweh’s promise to sustain them.

⁵⁷⁵ See Trible, “Exegesis for Storytellers and other Strangers,” 6–7.

⁵⁷⁶ Trible, “Exegesis for Storytellers and other Strangers,” 7.

⁵⁷⁷ Trible, “Exegesis for Storytellers and other Strangers,” 6.

Trible misses, for instance, how the widow's second address to Elijah as a "man of God" has a much different aim from how she previously addressed him with this title. She ignores how the widow first used this title as a barb towards Elijah at the sight of her dead son. She ignores the evolution of this character on the boundary of Elijah. Only after Elijah speaks the words, "Look, your son is alive!" does this widow stylize the intended meaning and intent behind the typically used speech genre, "man of God," to show that she now believes Elijah to speak authoritatively on behalf of God *for her and her son*.

Thus, although Tribble questioned if Elijah's word to Ahab in 17:1 was truly Yahweh's word, she misses the point that the widow also questioned Elijah's word, not *if* it was Yahweh's word, but *how* it was Yahweh's word *for her and her son*. It is only after Elijah returns the widow's son to her alive that she explicitly confesses his word to be "Yahweh's word," and also to be "truth." She, like Elijah and the biblical narrator, now knows what Jezebel and Tribble seemingly do not, that Yahweh is alive, and more than this, she believes that Yahweh is a God who remains faithful to his promise to sustain her and her son!

At the end of this narrative scene, the reader can see how life overcomes death in the ultimate way. Throughout this chapter, Yahweh's power of life increases as the threat of death also increases, as Hauser suggests.⁵⁷⁸ The dialogic reader, however, also recognizes that dialogic life has overcome monologic death among the characters as the biblical narrator has changed from using a monologic discourse style, which he used in the preceding regnal reports, to a dialogic discourse style in these Elijah narratives. When reading for the dialogues, and by studying the dialogic relationships among the biblical narrator, the characters, their speech

⁵⁷⁸ Hauser, "Yahweh versus Death," 21. This chapter, according to Hauser, "contains numerous challenges posed by death, challenges which grow in intensity as the chapter proceeds." He then writes, "These four challenges by death are answered by four life-giving responses from Yahweh."

discourses, and the reader, this chapter reveals the characters to be complex characters that change and evolve in an unfinalizable way, as they express themselves on the boundary of one another.

In other words, the biblical narrator's dialogic discourse reveals this chapter to be about more than just "Yahweh's power of life over death," and likewise, more than just a polemic against Baal and Mot, as Bronner and Hauser suggest. It also reveals Elijah's character to be more complex than the mere tool of the historical writer, or instrument of Yahweh, as they also assert.⁵⁷⁹ The biblical narrator's dialogic discourse shows Elijah's character to be shaped by other characters, and that other characters are shaped by Elijah in dialogue. He is the biblical narrator's instrument for bringing dialogic life to the narrative.

While the threat of death in the narrative may increase from scene to scene, dialogic life also increases throughout the narrative discourse until it reaches its climax in this last scene when Elijah is allowed to speak his own truth on the boundary of both Yahweh and the widow. In this last scene, the biblical narrator shows how Elijah's consciousness is certainly not fixed and finalized towards Yahweh as someone who just responds to Yahweh's commands with quiet obedience. Rather, by refraining himself from transcending Elijah's consciousness at the sight of the dead son, he shows Elijah's character to be open and evolving as he struggles with the widow's penetrating discourse towards him and with his faith in Yahweh's promise to sustain him, the widow, and her son. Elijah's struggle with this tragic death moves him to speak his troubled consciousness on the boundary of Yahweh. Yet, as he questions Yahweh, he does so in

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid. See also Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha*, 120, where she says that "act of resuscitation" shows that Elijah is God's instrument for giving or taking life."

faith, calling Yahweh “his God” to the threshold of decision to act as the God who truly lives and who keeps his promises.

As Elijah’s character is shown to be unfinalizable in dialogue on the boundaries of the widow and Yahweh, the biblical narrator allows the reader to see how the widow’s character and consciousness also evolves *on the boundary of* and *in dialogue with* Elijah. After Elijah “went up” to speak on the boundary of Yahweh with the dead son, he then “went down” with the living boy to speak on the boundary of the widow. As Elijah speaks on the boundary of the widow, the widow sees her living son and responds to Elijah’s word with a new confession far different from any of her previous speech expressions. As the widow confesses that “the word of Yahweh” in Elijah’s mouth is “truth,” she confesses that Elijah is a “man of God” *for her*, not *against her*. She also implies that Yahweh is no longer just Elijah’s God (your God) as she confessed in her oath to Elijah back in 17:12, but now she too believes that Yahweh is her God and her son’s God. From her new point of view, only Yahweh can bring life to a dead world.

Thus, just as the biblical narrator set Ahab apart for the ultimate monologic death in chapter 16, so also he sets Elijah and the widow apart in this last narrative scene of chapter 17 for the ultimate experiences of dialogic life. By refraining himself from transcending the widow’s and Elijah’s consciousnesses, the biblical narrator allows them both to evolve through dialogue in their relationship to each other and also in their understanding of and faith towards Yahweh and his promises. The widow’s confession ends this chapter showing the reader that life truly does overcome death, not just in the narrative world, but also in the narrative discourse.

If the reader were to read on further in the Elijah narratives, he or she would notice how the biblical narrator continues to bring dialogic life to this narrative discourse by allowing Elijah to speak on the boundary of other characters. In chapters 18 and 19 Elijah is allowed to speak his

penetrating word on the boundary of Obadiah, Ahab, the people of Israel, the prophets of Baal, and again towards Yahweh. These other characters are moved to express themselves, as the widow and Yahweh did, with their own point of views in response to Elijah. In dialogue with these characters, Elijah continues to be the biblical narrator's instrument for bringing dialogic life to his discourse. Elijah shapes the other characters, and is shaped by them *on the boundaries of* and *in dialogue with* their consciousnesses and their speech expressions.

CONCLUSION

I. Bakhtin's Value for Biblical Readers

Bakhtin's dialogic approach explains the complex reality of dialogue, those that take place among people in the real world as well as those that take place among authors, characters, and readers about the narrative world. His approach, thus, offers valuable insights to readers who desire a way to interpret complex biblical characters in a more realistic way than has been proposed by many other interpretational approaches.⁵⁸⁰ Many biblical characters are depicted as real people, or at least as imitations of real people, speakers of their own point of views in dialogue with others. They are not mere functions of plot, polemics, or ideology, as many purist approaches have suggested. The complexities of their characters, instead, are revealed as they express themselves in dialogic relationship to other characters and their point of views.

Bakhtin's dialogic approach also shows that interpreting such characters in a realistic way is more complex of an experience than just building "paradigm traits" for them, as Seymour Chatman's approach suggests. The reading experience, according to Bakhtin, is not a finalized event where the reader attempts to interpret what a character is "like," but rather an unfinalizable event, a dialogue with the author and characters and their point of views. The dialogic reader's goal is to interpret how the author, and, or narrator are conscious of themselves and the characters, as well as how the characters are conscious of themselves and others. The dialogic reader then enters into dialogue by responding from his or her own point of view to the author and the characters and their point of views.

⁵⁸⁰ McCracken, "Character on the Boundary," 29, points out that other characters' theories proposed by Aristotle, Chatman, Propp, and Barthes have "various powers," but have not been able to respond to the "peculiar challenges of biblical characters."

When reading for the dialogues of the Elijah narratives, as pointed out in the preceding chapter, the reader can see that Elijah is depicted as complex biblical character. He is not flattened by the author as a mere function of plot, polemics, or ideology, nor can the complexities of his character be adequately interpreted by simply building for him a paradigm of traits, because his consciousness is not a finalized image. He is depicted as a character that is allowed to reveal himself in dialogue with the other characters, free from the control of the biblical narrator's point of view. His point of view is, subsequently, allowed to shape others, and be shaped by others in dialogue. Thus, Elijah is depicted in an unfinalized way, evolving as a character in a web of dialogic relationships.

Further complexities of Elijah's character, as well as the biblical narrator's consciousness, are revealed by studying how their voices are in dialogue with voices of already spoken discourses within the biblical narrative. Elijah re-accentuates speech genres that have been created and given to him by his Israelite community, such as the introductory Hebrew oath formula, "Yahweh is alive!" and the confession that Yahweh is "the God of Israel." He uses these speech genres to make his own personal confession in Yahweh as his God, but also to cast a polemic barb at Ahab's idolatrous worship of and confession in Baal. Elijah also re-accentuates the words, "Do not fear," spoken by the Angel of God to Hagar in Genesis 21, and also spoken by Boaz in Ruth 3. He uses their words to call the widow of Zarephath to faith in Yahweh as the God who can sustain her and her son, just as the Angel of God and Boaz used these words to call Hagar and Ruth to believe in the sustaining care of Yahweh. Elijah's usage of these already spoken words not only show his deep faith in Yahweh, they reveal how his faith in Yahweh leads him to make confession in him as his personal God, speak against those who make confession in other gods, and call others to believe in Yahweh as their God.

The biblical narrator in 1 Kings 17, likewise, uses already spoken discourses from previous biblical narrators in order to express his point of view of Yahweh. He re-accentuates Yahweh's commands and promises to Elijah with words spoken by the biblical narrator's of Genesis 1 and Exodus 16. In so doing, he show the reader that he believes the same Yahweh who shows himself to be faithful in sustaining Elijah with "bread and meat in the morning and evening" is the same Yahweh who created the "morning" and "evening," and the same Yahweh who fed Moses and Israel "bread in the morning" and "meat in the evening" in the wilderness.

The dialogic reader is, thus, able to recognize how the characters and consciousnesses of Elijah and the biblical narrator are also shaped by already spoken discourses and how their re-accentuations of these already spoken words are used to shape their hearers with penetrating force. The biblical narrator and Elijah do not just have faith in Yahweh as the living God of Israel. Their dialogues with the biblical narrators and characters of other biblical narratives show that they believe in Yahweh as their God because of what he has already done at creation and in sustaining the people of Israel in the wilderness, as well as Hagar and Ishmael, Ruth and Naomi. More than this, by dialoguing with these already spoken discourses, they implicitly call their hearers to also believe in Yahweh as a God who can sustain them.

Finally, even when the biblical narrator uses monologic discourse to depict his characters, as in the regnal reports that precede the Elijah narratives, Bakhtin's dialogic approach offers valuable insights for interpreting the flattened textual characters. While the reader can easily understand the intent of the biblical narrator's monologic discourse in the regnal reports of the Israelite Kings, reading dialogically allows the reader to better understand the force of his monologic discourse towards the characters. Any reader can understand that the biblical narrator of these regnal reports believes that the Israelite kings are "evil in the eyes of Yahweh." Reading

dialogically, however, allows the reader to see more clearly how the biblical narrator sets Ahab apart, not just as the last king in a sequence of six, but as being the most “evil in the eyes of Yahweh,” particularly because of his idolatry. Understanding this is important for the reader who desires to interpret the complexities of Elijah, because it prepares the reader to be in dialogue with an Elijah that is speaking in response to Ahab and his idolatry more than in response to Jezebel or to the Canaanite pantheon as scholars such as Tribble, Bronner, and Hauser have suggested.

II. Bakhtin’s Value for a Confessional Lutheran Community

In addition to offering valuable insights for interpreting biblical characters, Bakhtin’s dialogic approach to interpreting written discourses proposes a style of reading that the Confessional Lutheran community can appreciate for reading the Bible. Bakhtin’s dialogic approach to reading a written discourse is one that Confessional Lutherans can appreciate hermeneutically because it values the speech will or intent, of the author of the text, as Confessional Lutherans do when reading biblical texts. At the same time, since true dialogue takes place between or among two or more points of views, Bakhtin’s dialogic approach values the *outsidedness*, or the subjective point of view that the reader brings to the text. Confessional Lutherans, likewise, value the particular Christocentric and Gospel-centric outsidedness, or presuppositions, that they bring to the biblical texts as Confessional Lutherans.

The significance of Bakhtin’s dialogic approach to the Confessional Lutheran community, however, is far greater than simply recognizing that his understanding of the relationship between the author and reader is compatible with the Confessional Lutheran view. By understanding the reading experience as a dialogue among many voices, Bakhtin’s dialogic approach offers the Confessional Lutheran community an effective way of understanding and

articulating its hermeneutical approach to biblical texts. It also provides an effective way of dialoguing with other interpretational communities it agrees with and disagrees with concerning the interpretation of these texts.

By seeing the reading experience as a dialogue, the Confessional Lutheran reader sees himself or herself in dialogue with the voices of the biblical authors.⁵⁸¹ In order to be in dialogue with the biblical authors, the modern reader must first understand their ancient point of views so that he or she can respond to it from his or her point of view. Confessional Lutheran readers, thus, value the voices outside of the text that provide linguistic insight, and metalinguistic insight (as Bakhtin has shown), as well as isagogical insights that enable the reader to better understand the intended meaning of these ancient biblical texts.⁵⁸²

A Confessional Lutheran reader, for instance, values Leah Bronner's voice in her comparison of the Ancient Near Eastern Ras Shamra texts to the Elijah narratives. Although her study flattened Elijah's character, her voice reveals important isagogical information concerning the Elijah narratives by allowing the reader to hear the voices of the ancient Canaanite religion and mythology that was so influential in Ahab and Jezebel's rule of Israel. Being able to hear the ancient Canaanite voices enables the modern reader to better understand the ancient world, and subsequently, the intended meaning and possible aims of the discourses spoken by the biblical

⁵⁸¹ In narrative-critical terms, the Confessional Lutheran sees the biblical author as the same point of view as the biblical narrator.

⁵⁸² In other words, it is not just time that creates interpretational space between the American or Western reader and these ancient biblical authors, but also language and culture. For the role of and importance of using isagogic voices to help determine the meaning of biblical texts, see Horace Hummel, *The Word Becoming Flesh: An Introduction to the Origin, Purpose, and Meaning of the Old Testament*, (St. Louis: Concordia, 1979), 11. Hummel explains, "Isagogics concerns itself primarily with questions of date, authorship, occasion, and purpose of writing." He then writes, "Nevertheless, both because of the importance we attach to the Bible and because of its antiquity, it deserves not less, but more isagogical examination than ordinary literature."

authors or narrators, and characters. As pointed out in the previous chapter, knowing that the Canaanites had a confession in Baal similar to the introductory Hebrew oath formula, “Yahweh is alive,” allows the modern biblical reader to more clearly understand the polemical force of Elijah’s re-accentuation of the Hebrew oath and confession in Yahweh spoken to Ahab.

A Confessional Lutheran reader, on the other hand, would disagree with the voices of readers that do not value the intended meaning of the biblical authors’ discourses. Phyllis Trible’s deconstructive interpretation of the Elijah narratives brings such a voice to the biblical text, as she seeks to “confound authorial intentionality for the sake of spicing theological discourse.”⁵⁸³ She interprets Elijah as “a promoter of a religious conflict” and as a character that portrays tyranny and intolerance, destroying “civility,” even though this is clearly not how the biblical narrator, Yahweh, and the widow of Zarephath view Elijah.⁵⁸⁴ She deems Jezebel as the “tolerant” and “civil” character, opposite of Elijah, even though it is Jezebel, according to the biblical narrator and Obadiah in 1 Kings 18, who killed the prophets of Yahweh.⁵⁸⁵ Her interpretation of the Elijah narratives is, therefore, problematic to a Confessional Lutheran reader, as well as any Bakhtinian reader, because she does not seek to be in dialogue with the intended meaning of the biblical writer. Her voice and point of view, instead, overpowers the voice of the biblical writer so that his point of view is no longer a valid one next to hers.

In addition to valuing the voices of the biblical authors, as well as those voices that help the modern reader to better understand the intent of their ancient discourses, a Confessional Lutheran reader values the voices of its historic Confessional Lutheran and Christian community. The

⁵⁸³ Trible, “Exegesis for Storytellers and Other Strangers,” 3.

⁵⁸⁴ Trible, “Exegesis for Storytellers and Other Strangers,” 6.

⁵⁸⁵ See 1 Kings 18:4,13.

voices of the larger Confessional Christian community provide the proper outsidedness or presuppositions to guide the reader to believe the claim that biblical texts make, that the biblical writers' discourses and their point of views are inspired by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of giving eternal life to sinners.⁵⁸⁶ In other words, the Confessional voices teach the modern Confessional reader to not just interpret the Bible as texts with an intended meaning, but as God's Word that intends to create and sustain faith in Christ for salvation.⁵⁸⁷

This knowledge and faith to believe in the biblical texts as God's Word is correctly confessed and acknowledged as a gift given by the Holy Spirit through the biblical texts as the biblical texts themselves claim.⁵⁸⁸ Yet, the gifts of faith and knowledge are gifts not received solely by reading the biblical texts. They must be taught and proclaimed to the hearer and reader. This is why Jesus commanded his disciples to not just baptize, but to also "teach everything" he commanded them.⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁸⁶ The Scriptures themselves claim that they are inspired by the Holy Spirit. See 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:20–21. See also David W Lotz, "Sola Scriptura: Luther on Biblical Authority," *A Journal of Bible and Theology* 19 (1981): 263. Lotz, "Sola Scriptura: Luther on Biblical Authority," 266, writes, "Scripture for Luther is God's Word since it has God the Holy Spirit as its ultimate author." He also writes, "The Bible had been received and acknowledged as the source and standard of revealed truth within the church through the centuries,"—in other words it was received as God's inspired Word since the "age of the church fathers."

⁵⁸⁷ See 2 Timothy 3:15, where St. Paul tells Timothy that the "sacred writings" are "able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Lotz, "Sola Scriptura: Luther on Biblical Authority," 265, also points out that for Luther and the Reformers Scripture held its "dignity because it witnesses to Christ the Word who is in Scripture as its matchless content and because it contains the gospel through which the risen and exalted Christ still speaks and acts redemptively on behalf of his church."

⁵⁸⁸ See Theodore G. Tappert, ed., "The Formula of Concord," in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (trans. Theodore G. Tappert; Philadelphia: Fortress), 526, where the Reformers who give credit to the Holy Spirit for opening the "intellect and heart to understand the Scriptures." They point to Titus 3:5–6, which speaks of the Holy Spirit working regeneration and renewal in the hearts and minds of sinners through "washing," or baptism.

⁵⁸⁹ See Matthew 28:20. See also Acts 8:28–40, where Philip had to teach the Ethiopian how to properly understand Isaiah 53; and also 2 Timothy 3:10 where St. Paul reminds Timothy how he has followed "his teaching."

Therefore, the Christian reader must be taught how to read the biblical texts in the community of the Christian Church.⁵⁹⁰ This is why Confessional Lutheran churches use Martin Luther's Small Catechism to teach Christians how to properly understand and articulate their faith in Confirmation classes. Luther and the Reformers' teaching of the biblical texts are, likewise, confirmed by the greater community of the historic and apostolic church, which has handed this truth down as a gift from generation to generation.⁵⁹¹ The Confessional Lutheran reader sees the reading experience of a biblical text, thus, not just as a dialogue between the reader and the biblical author, but as a multi-voiced dialogue among the reader, the historical biblical authors, the Confessional Christian community, and most importantly God Himself.⁵⁹²

Since God is the ultimate author of each biblical text, Confessional Lutheran readers believe that the biblical authors are theologically reliable and possess an ideological integrity. Their goal is not to put down other races or give power to the male gender, but rather to point the individual reader and the Christian community as a whole to the saving work of the one true God in Jesus Christ. A Confessional Lutheran reader, thus, agrees with the biblical narrator's monologic point of view concerning Ahab's actions and Yahweh's consciousness towards Ahab and his actions. He or she believes the biblical narrator's reports that Ahab "served,"

⁵⁹⁰ See James Voelz, *What Does This Mean: Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Modern World* (2d ed.; St. Louis: Concordia, 1997), 221. The documents, which are contained in the Bible, as well as the proper way to interpret these documents, Voelz explains, is "preserved by the Christian community." One must be "within the Christian community and be taught to read by it," he writes. The three ecumenical creeds provide the basic confession, which guides the Christian community in reading God's Word.

⁵⁹¹ See Voelz, *What Does This Mean: Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Modern World*, 340. A "confessional posture," he writes, is "congruent with the understanding of the historic Christian church." Voelz refers the reader to the Lutheran Confessions, the preface of the *Book of Concord* on which the Reformers base their doctrine "solidly on the divine Scriptures" and that which is "summarized in the approved ancient symbols, recognizing the doctrine of the ancient consensus which the universal and ancient church of Christ has believed."

⁵⁹² See Voelz, *What Does This Mean*, 348. A proper interpretation of Scripture, or a confession of Scripture, Voelz writes, "restates what has been heard and received by the confessor, whether that be an individual or the church. A confession repeats what God says, and, as such, it is a speaking that is congruent with Sacred Scriptures, (continued next page)

“worshipped,” and “built” for Baal and Asherah, the Canaanite gods, and because of this, Yahweh, the God of Israel viewed Ahab as “evil,” not only because the biblical narrator said so, but because God has inspired him to say so.

Confessional Lutheran readers would, therefore, disagree with the voices of many feminist deconstructive readers, such as Tribble, who not only “confound authorial intentionality,” but also problematize the ideological integrity of the biblical authors. Such deconstructive readers seek to show the biblical authors’ ideology to be chauvinistic or racist. Jezebel’s character, according to Tribble, is “entrapped by hostile editors and male lords” who themselves are “masters of deconstructive strategies.”⁵⁹³ The Confessional Lutheran reader identifies the problem of Jezebel’s character not in her gender or race, but rather as the biblical author points out, her idolatry and her leading Israel into idolatrous worship.

More than this, since God is the ultimate author of these biblical texts, the Confessional Lutheran reader believes that the Elijah narratives, even the miracles performed by Elijah and Yahweh, are historically true and reliable. The Confessional Christian community guides the individual Christian reader to believe by faith that the miraculous events recorded in the Old Testament actually happened as they are recorded.⁵⁹⁴ It is the historicity of these events that provides the Confessional Christian community the important context to believe in God’s ultimate act in history—the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ for the salvation

which are God’s Word.”

⁵⁹³ Tribble, “Exegesis for Storytellers and Other Strangers,” 4, 6.

⁵⁹⁴ Hebrews 11:3. As the voice of the author of the book of Hebrews writes, “By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things visible.” See the whole chapter of Hebrews 11 where the biblical author walks the reader through miraculous events and people of the Old Testament narratives as historical events.

of sinners.⁵⁹⁵ Thus, the Confessional Lutheran reader sees the Old Testament narratives, including the miracles, as historical events, not just because he or she believes that these texts are inspired by God, but because the main purpose and the ultimate authority of these ancient texts are seen in how they point the modern reader to Jesus Christ and his work of salvation.⁵⁹⁶

A Confessional Lutheran reader would, therefore, disagree with readers from interpretational communities that bring voices and presuppositions to the biblical texts that question the historical reliability of the biblical authors' discourses. A Confessional Lutheran reader, for instance, would disagree with Simeon DeVries' point of view that attempts to defend a Christian theology apart from the historical reliability of the texts of the Elijah narratives. The "aim" of the miracle stories in these narratives, he writes, "is less to record what God *has done* (historically, at one particular time and place), than to declare what God *can do* (throughout every time and place)."⁵⁹⁷ DeVries' questioning the historical validity of the Elijah narratives and the miracles recorded in these narratives could easily lead the biblical reader to question the historical validity of Christ's life, death, and resurrection—the very foundation of the Christian faith.

Bakhtin's dialogic approach, on the other hand, helps Confessional Lutherans articulate what they see as the most important hermeneutical principle for reading the Bible—that all

⁵⁹⁵ See David W. Lotz, "The Proclamation of the Word in Luther's Thought," in *Word and World* 3/4 (1983): 351. Lotz points out that for Luther, the Old Testament scriptures are "precious" because they are "the swaddling clothes and manger in which Christ lies." (See LW 35, 236).

⁵⁹⁶ See Tappert, "Apology of the Augsburg Confession," in *The Book of Concord*, 97–286, where the Reformers explain that a proper understanding of faith in Christ must begin with correctly understanding the Gospel. As Lotz "Sola Scriptura: Luther on Biblical Authority," 265, points out, for Luther and the Reformers, "It is plain, therefore, that Scripture's authority is rooted in the underlying authority of the Gospel of Christ." In other words, Lotz, "Sola Scriptura: Luther on Biblical Authority," 266, writes, "In urging 'Scripture alone' Luther was urging 'Christ alone.'"

⁵⁹⁷ DeVries, *I Kings*, xxxvii, like many historical-critical scholars, attempts to defend a Christian theology without historical reliability of the biblical authors and texts. He writes, "The prophet stories must be studied, then, for what they teach, not simply for what they tell. The telling is an imaginative technique but the truth taught is profoundly theological."

biblical tests are Christocentric.⁵⁹⁸ Since the Confessional Lutheran reader desires to be in dialogue with Christ himself, and since he or she has been taught to see that the Gospel discourses reveal Christ's consciousness about himself and the Old Testament discourses, a dialogic approach would have the Confessional Lutheran reader see that when Christ tells his disciples in Luke 24 that all of the Old Testament is fulfilled in him, he himself is in dialogue with these already spoken discourses.⁵⁹⁹ When reading for the dialogues of Old Testament discourses, the Christian reader is called by Christ Himself through His words, confirmed through the witness and voices of the historic and apostolic Church to be in dialogue, not just with these Old Testament discourses and those who spoke them, but also with Jesus Christ who re-accentuated them. Confessional Lutheran readers, therefore, re-accentuate the Elijah narratives through their understanding of Jesus Christ, because He who stands resurrected from the dead did so, and because they have received his Word as a gift teaching them and the community of the Church how to be in dialogue with the Old Testament discourses.

This Christocentric gift of interpretation is most important for the modern Christian reader who desires to be in dialogue with the Elijah narratives as God's inspired word. It allows him or her to see in the Elijah narratives the one who is greater than Elijah. Where eternal death threatens, Christ creates the ultimate dialogic experience for all who believe in his power over life and death through his resurrection. He gives this power over life and death to people by speaking to them on the boundary of His life sustaining water at the threshold of baptism. He

⁵⁹⁸ As pointed out in chapter one, Bakhtin's dialogic approach is itself Christocentric, epistemologically based on Christ's incarnation as a dialogic gift for humanity. See Chapter 1, pages 8–9.

⁵⁹⁹ See Luke 24: 27 and 44.

gives this power over life and death to His disciples “in the upper room” where his body and blood are given and shed to eat and drink so that they may have life, and have it to the full.

When reading for the dialogues of the Elijah narratives in light of Christ’s dialogue about the Old Testament discourses, the Confessional Lutheran reader is compelled to interpret, or re-accentuate, the character of Elijah as a type of Christ. A typological re-accentuation does not change or “confound” the intended meaning of the historic biblical author as Tribble’s deconstructive reading does, nor does it question the historical validity of the Elijah narratives as DeVries’ historical-critical reading does.⁶⁰⁰ Rather, a typological re-accentuation seeks to understand the original intended meaning of the Elijah narratives, and then understand the validity of their historical accounts with an even greater significance as being fulfilled in Christ.⁶⁰¹

As the Confessional Lutheran reader sees many similarities between Elijah and Christ by reading the Elijah narratives typologically, he or she is also able to see Christ as more than just another prophet on the boundary of Yahweh as Elijah was shown to be. Christ did not just speak on behalf of His Father. He proclaimed that He and His Father are one.⁶⁰² He does not just receive water in miraculous ways when he his thirsty. He offers water that promises whoever

⁶⁰⁰ See Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation Of The Old Testament In The New* (trans. Donald H. Madvig; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), page x. Ellis in the foreword writes, “Unlike allegorical expositions, the typology of the NT writers represents the OT not as a book of metaphors hiding a deeper meaning but as an account of historical events and teachings from which the meaning of the text arises. . . . In typology . . . the OT type not only corresponds to the NT antitype but also is complemented and transcended by it.”

⁶⁰¹ Elijah’s speaking on behalf of Yahweh points the reader to see Christ, who not only spoke on behalf of His Father, but spoke with more authority than Elijah when he would say, “Truly, truly, I say to you.” Elijah’s prophesying that the rains would stop by his word point the read to see Christ, who commanded the wind and rains to stop, and they did so immediately. Elijah being “sustained” by ravens in the wilderness in the face of famine point the reader to see Christ who was “ministered” to by angels in the wilderness when he was hungry, but even more so when he was tempted by the devil. Elijah’s promise of never ending bread for the widow points the reader to see how Christ turned a few loaves of bread into never ending bread for thousands of people. Elijah’s call to Yahweh to restore the dead to life points the reader to see how Christ Himself called the widow of Nain’s son back to life.

drinks will thirst no more.⁶⁰³ He does not just offer bread to eat. He proclaims that he *is* the bread of life for who believe in Him.⁶⁰⁴ Christ showed that he is not just Yahweh's agent of life, but proclaimed that He *is* the resurrection and the life.⁶⁰⁵ Christ, not Elijah, showed himself to be the God of life when He Himself rose from the dead.

Finally, in addition to providing an effective way to articulate its hermeneutical approach to understanding biblical texts, Bakhtin points the Confessional Lutheran community to articulate its Christocentric theology and mission through the metaphor of dialogue. As pointed out in chapter one, Bakhtin's epistemological foundation for understanding speech communication is Christ's incarnation, which he saw as the greatest example of one consciousness expressing itself for others.⁶⁰⁶ In Christ, Bakhtin explained, we see for the first time an "infinitely deepened *I-for-myself*," which is "not a cold *I-for-myself*, but one of boundless kindness towards the *other*."⁶⁰⁷ Only in Christ, he pointed out, can we see the radical life that arises from incarnation, which makes use of one's self and one's perspective in dialogue with and for the sake of the other.⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰² John 10:30.

⁶⁰³ John 4:13–14; 6:35

⁶⁰⁴ John 6:48

⁶⁰⁵ John 11:25.

⁶⁰⁶ See chapter 1, pages 8–9, where Bakhtin's understanding of *I-thou* is compared and contrasted to Buber's. See again Alexandar Mihailovic, *Corporeal Words: Mikhail Bakhtin's Theology of Discourse* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 5. Mihailovic writes, "We cannot dismiss Bakhtin's interest in Christ as terminological because the interaction among Christological motifs saturates his critical lexicon of dialogue, carnival, and polyphony and is in fact crucial in defining the interrelatedness of those latter concepts."

⁶⁰⁷ Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in the Aesthetic Activity," 55.

⁶⁰⁸ *Ibid.* According to Bakhtin, "All human beings divide for him into himself as the unique one—and all other human beings, into himself as the one bestowing mercy—and all others as receiving mercy, into himself as the savior—and all others as the saved, into himself as the one assuming the burden of sin and expiation—and all others as relieved of this burden and redeemed."

In other words, in Christ we see the ultimate expression of the dialogic consciousness in dialogue with others and for the sake of others. As a result of Christ being in dialogue with me and for me, “God is now the heavenly father who is over me,” Bakhtin wrote, “and can be merciful to me and justify me where I, from within myself, cannot be merciful to me and justify myself.”⁶⁰⁹ This divine dialogue, which brings “forgiveness and redemption,” for Bakhtin, is similar to the way a person receives his or her language as well as other aspects of his or her consciousness from his community. It is a “pure gift (unmerited gift).”⁶¹⁰ Thus, Confessional Lutherans, who value Gospel-centered, Christocentric, and sacramental theology, will be intrigued by Bakhtin’s view of Christ as the ultimate dialogue partner with humanity, expressing himself as an unmerited gift in loving mercy and sacrifice for others.⁶¹¹

Understanding a Christocentric and sacramental theology dialogically invites the Confessional Lutheran to see the Scriptures and the sacraments not only as “means of grace,” but also as the means by which God expresses His voice and point of view in dialogue for the sinner. When a Christian is baptized, God is not just bestowing His grace upon that person through a “means.” He is voicing His opinion on that person. “You are my child. I have clothed you in the righteousness of my Son.” he declares. When a Christian receives the Lord’s Supper, he or she

⁶⁰⁹ Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in the Aesthetic Activity,” 56.

⁶¹⁰ Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in the Aesthetic Activity,” 143. Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, *Life Together* (trans. John W. Doberstein, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1954), 22, who lived during the same time period as Bakhtin, articulates a Confessional Lutheran theology in such dialogic terms and concepts. The Reformers, Bonhoeffer points out, expressed our righteousness as an “alien righteousness” that comes from outside. In other words, Bonhoeffer continues, “They were saying that the Christian is dependent on the Word of God spoken to him.”

⁶¹¹ See David W. Lotz, “The Proclamation of the Word in Luther’s Thought,” *Word and World* 3 (1983): 352, points out that Luther viewed God’s Word as a gift that need to be spoken as a gift for the hearer as well. He quotes LW 35:119 as he writes, “This ‘personalized’ form of speech, which presents Christ as God’s gift ‘for us’ is not dogmatic instruction or ‘doctrinal discourse,’ which treats the gospel as if it ‘were simply a textbook of teachings or laws.’” Instead, Lotz explains, “It proclaims, announces, declares that God in Christ loves, forgives, accepts you, me, us; and invites even incites, the hearts acceptance of this gift.”

does not just eat and drink a “means of grace.” He or she hears God voicing His opinion, “Your sins are forgiven. You will live forever!” When a Christian attends corporate worship and hears the pastor speak God’s Word in his teaching and preaching and in his administering absolution and the Sacraments, that Christian is not just attending worship. He or she, according to Bakhtin, is hearing God’s voice speaking to them, and therefore, invited to participate in a divine dialogue with God.

Viewing God’s Word and Sacraments as His means for dialogue in this way accentuates His voice as a penetrative point of view that seeks to act upon the hearer. It gives more attention to *God speaking and working through His Word and Sacraments*, rather than merely giving attention to His word and Sacraments. God Himself, not just His word, is dialogic by nature. He does not seek to give information, but rather to speak on the boundary of a sinner’s conscious to change that sinner into a justified saint.

Consequently, the Lutheran pastor preaches God’s Word, not simply to convey biblical information to the people of God. His task is not monologic, but rather dialogic as he seeks to invite his hearers into a multi-voiced dialogue. When preaching from an Old Testament text from the Elijah narratives, the dialogic task of the Lutheran preacher is complex. His goal is to bring his hearers into dialogue with a number of voices—the biblical author or authors of the chosen text and also the larger narrative context, as well as the characters of the chosen text, and most likely, the characters of the greater biblical context. He may bring the hearer into dialogue with voices that can enable the hearer to better understand the intended meaning of the biblical authors’ discourses. He may also bring the hearer into dialogue with voices from the contemporary world and culture, perhaps even the voices of those sitting in the pew that may

question or doubt the intended meaning of the biblical authors' discourse in order to allow God's voice to cast a polemic barb or sideward glance towards the questioning or doubting voice.

Ultimately, the Lutheran preacher seeks to allow Jesus Christ himself to speak his point of view to the hearers. The goal of the dialogic preacher is not just to inform the hearers who God or Jesus Christ are, but rather allow God to reveal how he is conscious of himself, the world, and especially his hearers in Christ. As the Lutheran preacher allows God to reveal Himself in Christ, God is able to put the hearer to death by His law so that He can make the hearer alive again to live in dialogic relationship with him.

As Bakhtin points the Confessional Lutheran to see his or her identity as a result of being in dialogue with God through Christ, he also encourages the Confessional Lutheran to see his or her purpose and mission as God's child to be in dialogue with others, and with the world. When a person is baptized and becomes a Christian, he or she becomes a dialogue partner of God in Jesus Christ, but he or she also becomes a dialogue partner with others. The radical result of Christ becoming incarnate and in dialogue with me, Bakhtin wrote, is that I become "For myself, sacrifice; for the other, loving mercy."⁶¹² In other words, the dialogue that God has had with me in Christ changes me so that what Christ was for me, I can now become for others. I am no longer *I-for-myself*, nor do I simply become *I-for-the other*. Rather, I, through Christ become *I-for-myself-for the sake of the other*.⁶¹³

As Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a contemporary to Mikhail Bakhtin wrote, "When one person is struck by the Word, he speaks it to others. God has willed that we should seek and find His living Word in the witness of a brother, in the mouth of man." The Christian, he explained,

⁶¹² Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in the Aesthetic Activity," 56–57.

⁶¹³ Ibid.

“needs another Christian who speaks God’s Word to him.”⁶¹⁴ Thus, because God has given me a gift through His Word in Jesus Christ, so now I, as a Christian, am able to give a gift to others in my Christian community and outside my Christian community through my words spoken in Christ.⁶¹⁵ I am able to forgive others for the sins they have committed against me. I am able to point others to God’s Words of forgiveness and salvation in Jesus Christ in spite of the sins they have committed towards Him. I am compelled to speak the forgiving and justifying word that was first spoken to me at my baptism, and which is daily spoken to me by God through His Word. I am in dialogue with others for others because God in Christ was first in dialogue with me!

⁶¹⁴ Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 22–23, also wrote, “God has put this Word into the mouth of men in order that it may be communicated to other men.” When a Christian becomes uncertain or discouraged by his or her sin or the surrounding world, he or she needs another Christian, Bonhoeffer pointed out, to be the “bearer and proclaimer of the divine word of salvation” because the Christ in one’s own heart, “is weaker than the Christ in the word” of another.

⁶¹⁵ Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 25, writes, “What God did to us, we then owed to others. The more we received, the more we were able to give . . . I am a brother to another person through what Jesus Christ did for me and to me; the other person has become a brother to me through what Jesus Christ did for him.”

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