

FICTION AND POLYPHONY

JOHN LECHTE

“... profound as psychology is,
it’s a knife that cuts both ways.”

—Council for the Defence in
The Brothers Karamazov

Before I come to explain what some of the consequences of fiction as polyphony are, let me say, by way of introduction, that our problem in a nutshell involves the symbolic and what we understand by this term. In particular, things in this regard could be said to turn around what is still, to my mind, a perennial problem in literary criticism, namely, an author’s relationship to what he/she writes. Perhaps it is hardly necessary to repeat that, here, it is a question of life and death: the ‘Death of the author’ whose absence takes on a kind of ‘presence’ (= life) in the text — a ‘resurrection accomplished in signs’, as Julia Kristeva has called it. (Kristeva, 1981;181) In a sense, therefore, those who used to maintain (and often still do — if only by implication) that a dash of psychology was sufficient to provide literary interpretation with illumination, may in fact have given us a clue as to how the literary critic might get onto the right track in this matter. For psychology, as our epigraph has it, ‘is a knife that cuts both ways’ (Dostoevsky, 1976;690); it oscillates between the notion of truth as referential and fiction (we will return to this point).

Thus when ‘Madam Bovary, c’est moi’ began to reverberate around the psychologist’s camp — when Flaubert himself was there deemed to be the leading protagonist of his fiction, one could have done worse, in

my view, than reply: 'Ah yes, that's Flaubert there all right, but masked, displaced, as the name itself in his text — as woman, in short, in the place of the symbolic (Other).'

Joyce would feature similarly in *Finnegans Wake* (1939); or rather the name, 'Joyce', would feature in this 'sinscript' (FW 421) of a 'meanderthalltale' (FW 25) (= fiction). Thus if 'Shem is as short for shemus as Jem is joky for Jacob' (FW 169) there is Joyce himself, to be sure, in his text — give or take — or change — a letter or two — or is it a litter or two? For those who doubt it, how about: 'Shem the penman' (FW 125) or 'Pain the Shamman'? (FW 192) or 'Shun the Punman'? (FW 93) 'joynstone'? (FW 192) or simply, 'Mr Jingleyoys'? (FW 466). The point is that if these names and punning phrases evoke the name, 'James Joyce', through 'echo' and/or association, this echo — or metonymy — also blurs the presence of the name in the text, makes it a little uncertain and problematic, opens up the way to interpretation(s). This echo, clearly, is thus the basis of a seduction of the reader. Previously, criticism ignored the problematic aspect of displacement and preferred instead to jump to conclusions — as is evidenced by the case of Flaubert. It is this problematic aspect, however, which is also the poetic, or 'written', aspect of the text. I am saying, then, that for the writer to be in the text symbolically, is to 'be' in it problematically.

Such would be the context, then, whereby the writer produces the position of writer — which is, at the same time, the 'place' of writing as writing. To put it another way: the writer's position is equivalent to the 'enactment' of textuality, or the *mise en scène* of the *énonciation*. Jean-Louis Houdebine thus writes with regard to Molly's monologue in *Ulysses*, that:

... the importance of *Penelope* is of the order of the *written* (*écrit*); and this writing (*écrit*) is not interpretable only from the point of view of the avatars of the fable, that is, of the characters "with a human face". It is a writing (*écrit*), then, which stages (*met en scène*) an *énonciation* of woman entirely constructed *from the outside* (*de l'intérieur*), not a woman as character ... (Houdebine, 1981;60).

And Houdebine adds in a note that nowhere in the *Penelope* episode is Molly objectivated as a 'character': "it is a voice which is speaking, and through its speaking (*parole*) the contours of the body are designated, not the reverse' (Houdebine, 1981; note 58).¹

With respect to this writing as *énonciation*, the writer is no longer in the position of 'self' (= ego) on the one side and the text as object on the other — as was the case, or would be the case, for a certain psychology

(more aptly named, 'ego psychology'). Rather, the writer occupies the place of the symbolic itself — this symbolic order which is the condition of possibility of language as such. In other words, the writer of fiction brings the possibility of a metalanguage into question: something is written which is inseparable from the (poetic) signs of writing as writing; something which is inseparable from the signs that tell us that the 'saying' as such is part of the meaning; what is said includes the saying — as is illustrated by Molly's poetic 'yes' in the following passage:

... I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes (Joyce, 1968;704).

The interesting, and disturbing, thing to my mind is that in fact the writer's position is the position of all of us in so far as we are speaking beings and traversed by the symbolic.

The symbolic for us, as users of language, as beings constituted in and through language, implies that there is no *outside* of language. There is no outside of language — it is essentially fictional (Barthes) — and yet it is by no means the case that, after all, we have been speaking poetically all our lives rather than prosaically; we would thus be hard-pressed to show any real advance on M. Jourdain! What is even more remarkable here, is that language itself constitutes its own 'outside'; language produces a meta-linguistic position, as it were, to which we are all committed — despite ourselves. Psychoanalysis has tried to explain this division between the two levels of language by a theory of repression. The concept of repression in this context has less to do with the loss of knowledge of a specific event, than it has to do with the 'wall' of incommunicability (Kristeva, 1981;172) between, let us say, the 'poetic' and the 'prosaic' self — the two dimensions being what constitutes the subject. The poetic self is still speaking through the prosaic self, but is unable to communicate with it without recourse to a third position (= analyst, or writer). This is what Freud terms the split (*Spaltung*) of subjectivity.

The artist as writer, like the analyst perhaps, is interested in depicting both aspects of subjectivity, of placing both aspects before an audience. This *poetry*, however, is not necessarily the voice of his own unconscious (although that may be there also); rather, it is equivalent to the 'placing' itself — the placing of the prosaic on stage so that we experience not only what is *said*, but the 'saying' as well. Or to cite

Finnegans Wake again (yes, 'Finn again!'), there is 'sensesound' as well as 'soundsense' (FW 121). The writer as artist — if one is Joyce, Mallarmé, or, as we shall see, Dostoevsky (the rest is journalism!) — is interested in signifying this division of subjectivity: a division to which it is essentially impossible to gain access other than aesthetically — that is, fictively.

Such a trajectory opens up an extremely complex domain regarding the relationship, not only between the writer and the text, but also between language and ideology — whether one defines the latter in terms of 'doctrine', '*Weltanschauung*' or, like the French historian, Paul Veyne, as a 'noble and vague style' (rationalisation) which passes itself off as rigorous description (1978;213). It seems to me, however, that if we side-step the complexity for a moment, a Joyce, a Dostoevsky, and even a Céline — as artists — tend to make the concept of ideology a redundant category when it comes to analysing the bases of their work. This is underlined if we add that an ideology functions successfully only if what opposes it is reduced to silence, or even excluded altogether from the domain of discourse. Ideology then, is, in principle, homogeneous and excludes 'otherness'. To use Bakhtin's terms, ideology is 'monological' rather than 'dialogical' (Bakhtin, 1973;150-226). The ideologue, indeed, speaks only from one position — and this implies that the fictive quality of discourse is denied. As a result, we will argue that it is a 'heterogeneity of place' (Lacan) which characterises the work of the writer as artist. As I see it, the debate about ideology risks becoming sterile so much is it concerned with the extent to which consciousness is, or is not, an adequate explanation of human action. I would say further, with Paul Veyne, that 'to judge people by their acts [in which I would include 'speech acts'] is not to judge them by their ideologies' (1978;211). On this basis, therefore, if we are concerned to show that writing itself is essentially an act, it remains to be shown how the notion of ideology can provide any illumination here. In any event, I leave it to others to enter into the vicious circle of ideology if they wish.³ For my own part, I would like to turn instead to Dostoevsky, and in particular to *The Brothers Karamazov*, in order to show how Dostoevsky, as writer, is both 'actor and impresario' in relation to what he writes (cf. Kristeva 1981;165).

Bakhtin's work, as more and more people are aware, has shown that Dostoevsky's major novels have a 'polyphonic' structure. This means that rather than presenting another more or less transparent version of the self, the texts in question have the structure of the 'I' in series, where each 'I' represents a relatively autonomous centre of enunciation. The monologic novel, let us note, tends to have a single centre of enunciation. Not a reflection of the persona of the one who writes, then,

but an entirely 'other' subject is what is presented. Thus Bakhtin remarks that:

For the author the hero is not 'he' and not 'I', but a full valued 'thou', that is another full-fledged 'I' ('Thou art'). (Bakhtin, 1973; 51)

Such is the basis of the de-centred structure of polyphony which makes works like *The Brothers Karamazov* or *The Devils* dialogical rather than monological texts.

This 'I' in series corresponds to the *mise en scène* of the *énonciation*: it is a kind of *dramatisation* of voice(s). To achieve this effect, the writer must 'distance' himself from each of his creations while remaining intimately involved with them and fundamentally interested in the process of their becoming *written* bodies. This is to say that the artist/writer throws himself into the void, deals exclusively with the Other as the place of signification and thus of the *énonciation*. A heterogeneous place, quite obviously. Or, more theologically, the word is with the writer; the writer is (in the place of) the word. Kristeva describes this situation in these terms:

[Dostoevsky] does more and does better than his characters: he speaks from their place like them but *in addition*, he sees them from a distance and puts them on stage; he is himself Father and his own Son. (Kristeva, 1981;180).

'Polyphony', therefore, also means 'heterogeneity of place' with the writer coming to assume the 'non-place' of the *mise en scène* as such. The writer is 'between the lines', as it were, dis-placed.

With a text like *The Brothers Karamazov*, however, it seems to me than one can go further in justifying this conception of writing as a *mise en scène* by referring to certain events that are recounted in the novel. Indeed, like Freud before us, how could we fail to be enticed to reflect on what is recounted - and the writer's place in the relation to this - when we are confronted with the death of a father: *Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov*?

In this regard, it is to be noted that not only is 'Fyodor' also Dostoevsky's christian name - which the translator, Ralph Matlaw tells us is equivalent to 'Theodor' in English, and means 'gift of God' (Matlaw in Dostoevsky; 743) - but also, the personage whom the narrator designates as the hero of the novel, Alyosha, bears the name of Dostoevsky's dead son. Father and son appear - but only through displacement - in the text. Thus, the idea that Dostoevsky is the father

in the novel should be tempered by the qualification that it is through the *name* - and thus, symbolically - that Dostoevsky comes to occupy the *place* of the dead father - precisely the position of every writer in relation to his own creation. It is the place indeed of the *dead* father which, from the perspective of psychoanalysis, constitutes the place of the Other and language as such. It is an absence (that is to say, death), therefore, which we will say is at the 'origin' of Dostoevsky's text. The fictionalised death, then, is what gives the text in question its fecundity. Hence it is within such a context that I would place Dostoevsky's announcement in *The Notebooks* that: 'We are all, to the last man, Fyodor Pavloviches' (Dostoevsky; 769).

To press the psychoanalytic aspect still further, let us note that J. Lacan has defined the general parameters of the context with which we are dealing here, when he says that paternity is 'transbiological' (Lacan, 1973; 224) and that it is this which is originally repressed. The question is: how is this transbiological phenomenon *thinkable*? - how is the truth of the father representable?

This is only thinkable [says Lacan] via this a-historical drama inscribed in the very flesh of men at the origin of all history — death, the murder of the father. A myth, quite clearly, a very mysterious myth ... (Lacan, 1981, 244)

And further:

What is at issue is an essential *dramatisation* [my emphasis] through which an internal surpassing (un *dépassement intérieur*) enters the life of a human being - the symbol of the father. (244)

It is necessary to interpret this remark. The 'symbol of the father' functions as a principle of unity for the narcissistically constituted ego. In other words, the Father occupies the place of the object or model which forms the basis of an imaginary identification which makes the Father the symbol of identity as such. This is why, according to Lacan, both sexes initially tend to identify with the Father (198). In addition, however, it is the place of the Father as the place of naming — and in particular, the proper name — which allows us to say that the symbol of unity is contained in the Name-of-the-Father. Consequently, it is the latter term which encapsulates the three aspects with which we are concerned: the concept of identity, the notion that identity is first of all a principle of unity and that, nonetheless, identity is essentially symbolic.

An identity, then, hovers on the border between unity and fragmentation. And this is experienced by the ego as a veritable struggle between

being and non-being. The fact, for instance, that a proper name is a *symbolic* anchorage means that it is susceptible to displacement; that one can make a pun out of it as Joyce does - or, indeed, as Fyodor Pavlovich does when he relates the anecdote at the monastery (33) about the time he went to a small town on business and asked the captain of police, 'Mr Ispravnik' (An *ispravnik* is a captain of police, Ralph Matlaw tells us in a note) (see note 3) if he would be his 'Napravnik' - this being the name of a well known orchestra conductor. 'The pun is elaborate' Matlaw explains, 'because the conductor's name actually suggests "conductor" or "director", while *ispravnik* suggest "rectifier" or "corrector".' (Bk 2, Ch. 11:33). Not surprisingly, perhaps, the captain was not amused and the business deal fell through. It is this imaginary identity of the ego constituted symbolically that the writer can thus exploit — sometimes exorbitantly — for his own artistic ends. He thereby profanes this sacred Name-of-the-Father in a gale of laughter and prefers to make the collapse of unity itself the source of his 'identity' in art. The problem that we must now examine, therefore, is that of how Dostoevsky will forge a unity out of this veritable heterogeneity of place which is his as artist. For to be sure, an absolute heterogeneity is chaos. The writer must make art out of this chaos.

On the basis of the above remarks, I contend that the polyphonic structure of *The Brothers Karamazov* can be seen to be entwined with what normally passes for the essential theme of the novel — namely, parricide: the murder of Fyodor, the trial of his son Dimitry, and the events surrounding it.

Each main event, or more exactly, each major situation, becomes the pretext for a relatively long discourse. The most famous of these would no doubt be Ivan Karamazov's 'poem', 'The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor' (Bk 5: Ch. V) — Ivan, let us recall, being the one who had convinced both churchmen and atheists alike that he was on their side with his 'strange article' on the widely debated question of ecclesiastical courts. (Bk 1, Ch III, 11). A summary sketch of this polyphony of discourses which constitutes Dostoevsky's novel would include: Dimitry's 'confessions' of love for Katerina (3:III-V); the elder Father Zosima's long oration about his past (6:II) which some would say is the counterpart to Ivan's poem; Ivan's three interviews (11:VI-VIII) — just prior to Dimitry's trial — with Smerdyakov (the bastard son of Fyodor — as gossip would have it) who finally confesses to the murder of Fyodor; Ivan's dream dialogue (or is it a monologue?) with the devil (11:IX) immediately following Smerdyakov's confession; and of course, there are the long speeches for the prosecution and the defence at Dimitry's trial (12:XI-XIII) in which a continual oscillation between guilt and innocence — marked by the reactions of the audience in the

court room — is set in motion. Dimitry who is innocent in a legal sense, is found guilty. This verdict corresponds to the *feelings* of guilt experienced by Dimitry. In effect, Dimitry hovers between guilt and innocence; or rather, his willingness to assume the position of the guilty party gives him an air of innocence.

In this way, the trial itself becomes illustrative of an important rhetorical figure which is at the heart of the polyphonic structure of the text, namely, oxymoron, which Bakhtin suggests is, in its turn, one of the features of the discursive figure of 'menippea'. Menippea, which borders on the carnivalesque, has no fear of depicting 'scandalous' and eccentric behaviour in its scenes, of employing 'incongruous speeches and performance' (Bakhtin; 96) and of generally violating the 'accepted, ordinary course of events and ... established norms'. (96) In sum, Bakhtin argues that 'The menippea contains many sharp contrasts and oxymoronic combinations' (97).

Thus oppositions such as love and hate, faith and atheism, sacred and profane, etc., depend on each other, threaten to merge into one another: 'Love', says Bakhtin, 'lives on the border of hate which it knows and understands, and hate lives on the border of love, and also understands it' (148) - which evokes Dimitry's cry to Katerina that he loved her even while he hated her (Bk 12, V; 655). Similarly, 'faith lives on the very border of atheism, sees its reflection in atheism and understands it, and atheism lives on the border of faith and understands it' (Bakhtin; 148), and so on.

Exemplary as the above oppositions are however, they are a manifestation — through displacement — of that opposition which is at the heart of repression: namely, the opposition between the real and the symbolic. Specific oppositions only function as displacements of this fundamental one not only because the latter shows that what constitutes the real for consciousness (=ego) is animated by the symbolic, but also because this fact, in its turn, risks producing a valorisation of contradiction and, consequently, the subversion of every particular position. Quite clearly, this is what no body can accept. No body can accept that the sacred is merely a disguised version of the profane, that the devil is really in God's service. The scandal of the Grand Inquisitor is to be found precisely there. Here, then, in a nutshell, is the scandal of scandals — the *unacceptable par excellence*: the absolute dissolution of the Name-of-the-Father. Indeed, the sacredness of the Name-of-the-Father derives from the effort of keeping this scandal at bay — a scandal which is also equivalent to the 'chaos' of the void.

Let us now examine the death of Fyodor Pavlovich in this light of scandal — 'Fyodor' whose name has already alerted us to the symbolic investment that Dostoevich has placed in this father's name. Let us

recall first of all that Fyodor, the father, is both an object of contempt and a 'buffoon' who makes puns out of people's names; but above all, we should bear in mind that Fyodor is a liar; he even admits to have been lying all his life:

... I have been lying, lying positively my whole life long, every day and hour of it. Of a truth, I am a lie, and the father of lies. Though I believe I am not the father of lies. I am getting mixed in my texts. Say the son of lies, and that will be enough. (Bk 2, Ch. II, 37)

In echoing John 8:44 - and thus in parodying the Bible (=sacred text) —, in being a liar and a buffoon, the ambiguity of Fyodor the father's position is revealed. This is a father, furthermore, who abandoned his first child, Dimitry, upon the suicide of his first wife as he did his two children from his second marriage, Ivan and Alyosha, following the mental collapse and subsequent death of his second wife, Sophia. Here, then, is a father who refuses to be one, who is his own son's rival in love and yet still claims the right to be respected by his children; here is a liar who acknowledges his moral weakness only in order to *lie* all the more successfully; an 'inveterate buffoon' who freely admits there is a devil within him (if 'only a little one') but only in order to ingratiate himself with the devout elders at the monastery whom he thinks it worthwhile to cultivate. Even when making such a 'confession', the text tells us, 'It was difficult to decide .. whether he was joking or really moved' (36). Here, finally, is a man, therefore, who openly profanes the Name-of-the-Father. Parricide will hardly be a bolt from the blue, it could be said.

However, it is within the ambit of the profanity we have designated that the scandal of Fyodor's death will arise and not simply in the scandal generated by a son killing his father (which is to understand 'scandal' precisely in the sense in which the crowd at Dimitry's trial understands this term). In other words, the *profound* scandal of parricide would consist in the lifting of the veil of repression. Parricide shows that sexuality (kinship) is a product of the symbolic, an effect of language⁴; it shows that the 'sacredness of the father is invested in an ordinary man, that the sacred is in the profane and certainly knows and understands it. Through oxymoron, we can thus speak about the 'sacredness' of the profane and the 'profanity' of the sacred. Furthermore, this scandal which echoes the 'scandal of scandals' — and which is constitutive of Dimitry's impossible status as criminal and innocent victim — is established through the 'two-edged weapon' of psychology.

Dimitry is condemned by psychology which, as Fetyukavich the defence council says, exists on the border of *fiction*. Here, psychology is, in the end, dependent on circumstantial evidence⁵ — clouded in an

atmosphere of gossip: *it is said that* Dimitry talked loudly in taverns about murdering his father, etc.⁶ Much is indeed confused in the babble of gossip (cf. Joyce). And yet Dimitry is found guilty - even though there were no witnesses to the crime. 'For is it likely', the psychologist says 'that a man like that (that is, a Karamazov) who had the opportunity to murder the father he hated, would not take it?' The answer for the psychologist is a clear negative. For a Karamazov does not think, like Hamlet, of the consequences; he does not give a thought to 'what lies beyond':

I don't know (says the prosecutor-psychologist) whether Karamazov wondered at that moment 'What lies beyond' and whether a Karamazov could like Hamlet, wonder 'What lies beyond'. No, gentlemen of the jury, they have their Hamlets, but we, so far, have only our Karamazovs! (Bk 12, Ch. IX, p. 680)

The Karamazov nature, as the prosecutor had earlier affirmed, is *typically* Russian (cf. Bk 12, Ch. VI; 663 and 665), a product of the 'norm' which Gerard Genette indicated is at the basis of verisimilitude (Genette, 1969; 74-75).

The psychologist, then, is the one who deals with the 'typical' case, the 'normal' case — the one for whom the sacred is sacred and evil, evil; the one for whom the other is not 'difference' but another version of self: an *alter-ego* which, to be sure, is not recognised as such. If the psychologist had an intimation of difference, he would be an artist and not a prosecutor. In effect, the psychologists's fiction passes for truth until it is put on stage by the artist. In this context, Dimitry's defence council seems to touch — albeit, indirectly — on the writer's position by drawing attention to the fictionalising impulse of psychology — an impulse into which it has no insight. Thus Fetyukavich observes ironically that having heard in the 'highly talented prosecutor's speech a stern analysis of the defendant's character and conduct (Bk 12, Ch. X; 690), it is to be noted that the prosecutor

went into psychological subtleties in order to explain the essence of the matter to us, into which he could not have entered, if he had the least conscious and malicious prejudice against the defendant. But there are things which are even worse, even more fatal in such cases, than the most malicious and consciously unfair attitude. It is worse if we are carried away by a certain artistic creation, so to speak, the composition of a novel, especially if God has endowed us with psychological insight. (Bk 12, Ch. X, 680)

Fetyukavich contends, in sum, that psychology is 'a knife which cuts both ways': it can be used to support the most varied interpretations of a specific set of actions. Thus, this 'double-edged', or even, 'oxymoronic' quality of psychology, along with the attendant possibility of a multiplicity of meanings, is what gives it its status as fiction, its tenuous link with the referent. Although this puts us onto the right track with regard to the writer's aims and concerns, it is important to see that Dostoevsky is not a psychologist — and thus a producer of fiction which has lost its grip on the referent — in this sense. For Dostoevsky is not simply a psychologist; rather, as polyphonist, he is this *and* an anti-psychologist as well. As a result, it is important to see fiction here as more than the emergence of imaginary creations which are passed off as real. On the contrary, Dostoevsky's text is concerned to depict the 'reality' of the illusion itself. But this can occur only if the place (usually occupied by the critic) from which a judgement is habitually made about where reality ends and illusion begins, is dissolved — that is, becomes *part* of what is depicted. The writer is saying that the *world* is polyphonic — that the world is the 'saying' itself. I would suggest, therefore, that Fyodor Pavlovich's death is brought about by the fact that he occupies the ambiguous and untenable position of liar and buffoon. Indeed, the hatred for Fyodor resulting in his murder, is the outcome of the dissolution of the Name-of-the-Father, of the position of unity. Fyodor thereby gives us an intuition of the chaos of the world which is only bearable in two ways: either through a fantasy of unity characteristic of narcissism, or through the artistic effort to *portray* this chaos in a way which is equivalent to chaos becoming art through polyphony.

The Grand Inquisitor, too, I would further contend, is another version of the dissolution of the Name-of-the-Father. For the Inquisitor is another whose status is supremely ambiguous, whose 'position' is founded on a deception.

Indeed, the idea that the Inquisitor has a position (a love of humanity and a strategy for helping this humanity attain its 'worldly bread' of happiness) must be tempered by the fact that it is a deception which constitutes the basis of the Inquisitor's 'identity'. For the Inquisitor straddles the worlds of both Christ *and* the devil;⁷ he loves the people and at the same time the manifestation of this love is impossible without the underlying contempt for them mirrored in a disrespect for truth in their presence. To do Christ's work (the good) entails being in league with the devil (=evil) - but with the absolute proviso that this always remain a secret. The truth, therefore, is that the Inquisitor only *pretends* to work in Christ's name.

The radically unorthodox character of the Grand Inquisitor's discourse

in which Christ becomes the accused, endows it with an air of menippea — orthodoxy here being nothing other than the clear *separation* of good and evil. Because Christ and the devil change places — so that now, it is the devil who has a profound concern for humanity (especially the weak) — the very intimate interdependence between good and evil, sacred and profane, truth and lie is thereby announced — that is, put on stage. The devil is shown to be the means whereby Christ might manifest his righteousness. Indeed, in order for Christ to resist the devil's temptation in the wilderness (the central issue of the Inquisitor's discourse), he had to be tempted in the first place. In this sense, the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor suggests that Christ and the devil know and understand one another — but only at the price of the Christ's position — as a position — being rendered profoundly unstable. To such an extent, perhaps, that 'unity' only exists here at the level of the discourse, or 'poem', itself — a discourse which could be seen to include the continuing dialogue between Ivan and his brother Alyosha about faith and atheism. At the level of discourse, in effect, there is a kind of re-establishment of the Name-of-the-Father.

Dostoevsky himself would be similarly 'saved' from the exorbitant chaos that a heterogeneity of place implies. In other words, Dostoevsky's art is the unifying principle (the only unifying principle) which prevents a radically de-centred wor(l)d from resembling the world of psychosis. Dostoevsky is the principle of unity of his text, therefore, in the act of presenting diversity through the art of writing. It is this act of presentation which is fiction for the writer and at the same time the 'centre of gravity' of his art. It is this act, indeed, which saves Dostoevsky's writing from resembling Ivan's devil who appears to him just prior to Dimitry's trial - a devil, we read, who is nothing but the 'x in an indeterminate equation' (Bk11, Ch.IX;609), 'a sort of phantom in life who has lost all beginning and end' (609) and who keeps us dangling between 'belief and disbelief by turns' (612). What kind of art is it, indeed, which could put this devil on stage? Nothing more *fictional* than this 'place' of the writer. But nothing closer to being a 'gift of God' — 'Fyodor' — either.

FOOTNOTES

1. Let us note here that from the feminine writer's position, Emily Brontë's Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* similarly marks out the writer's (displaced) position — and quite strikingly. For Catherine Earnshaw, it will be recalled, says: 'I am Heathcliff!' and she adds: 'He's always, always in my mind: not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself, but as my own being' (Chapter 9). As Georges Bataille has shown in *La Littérature et le mal* (Paris, 1957) — albeit with a slightly different aim in view — it would be a mistake to see Heathcliff simply in the mode of Catherine's *alter-ego*. He is rather Catherine's radical Other who yet speaks through her — just as, no doubt, Emily Brontë speaks 'through' both Catherine and Heathcliff by constituting them as two autonomous subjects, as voices which are speaking rather than an *alter-ego*.
2. Veyne writes: "We are now beginning to understand what ideology is: a noble and vague style appropriate for idealising practices under the guise of describing them".
3. It may be added that the whole of this paper implicitly takes issue with the notion that an explicitly fictive text can have *direct* political and/or moral effects — effects which some would argue are what ideology in literature is all about. Such a notion is at the heart of many a justification of censorship and certainly forms the basis of Rousseau's theory of the function of fiction from which many have yet to free themselves entirely.
4. This expression is part of a remark by Phillippe Sollers to the effect that 'not only is there no natural sexuality, but that what one takes to be sex is only ever an effect of language' — J.L. Houdebine/P. Sollers, "La Trinité de Joyce" in *Tel Quel*, No. 83, Spring, 1980, p. 65.
5. Fetyukavich points out, for example that:

Now, thank God! we've come to the real point: 'since he was in the garden, he must have murdered him' [i.e. Fyodor Pavlovich]. In those few words: 'since he was, then he *must*' lies the whole case for the prosecution. (Bk 12, Ch. Xii, p. 698).
6. Cf. the remarks of Fetyukavich again in *ibid*.
7. Cf. the Grand Inquisitor's remark that, 'We are not working with Thee, but with *him* — that is our mystery. It's long — eight centuries — since we have been on *his* side and not on 'Thine' (Bk 5, Ch. V, p. 238).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BAKHTIN, Mikhail: *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, translated by R.W. Rotsel (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1973), and in particular, Chapter Five, 'The Word in Dostoevsky'.
- DOSTOEVSKY, Fyodor: *The Brothers Karamazov*, translated by Constance Garnett and revised by Ralph E. Matlaw (and including) *Backgrounds and Sources, Essays in Criticism* edited by Ralph E. Matlaw (New York: Norton Critical edition, 1976).
- GENETTE, Gerard: *Figures II* (Paris, Seuil, 1969).
- HOUDEBINE, Jean-Louis: "De Nouveau sur Joyce: 'Litterature' et 'Religion' " in *Tel Quel*, no 89, Autumn 1981.
- JOYCE, James: *Finnegans Wake* (London, Faber and Faber, 1939).
- KRISTEVA, Julia: 'Nom de mort ou de vie' in Jacques Sédat (ed.) *Retour à Lacan* (Paris, Fayard, 1981).
- LACAN, Jacques: *Le Séminaire, livre XI: Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse* (Paris, Seuil, 1973).
- LACAN, Jacques: *Le Séminaire, livre III: Les Psychoses* (Paris, Seuil, 1981).
- VEYNE, Paul: 'Foucault révolutionne l'histoire' in *Comment on écrit l'histoire* (Paris, Seuil, 'Points', 1978).