

Metrical Hybridization: Prosodic Ambiguities As a Form of Social Dialogue

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Parlant du rythme, c'est de vous que je parle, c'est vous qui parlez, les problèmes du rythme sont les vôtres. La critique du rythme n'a pas de conclusion. Elle est ouverte sur l'historicité du langage, de la littérature, de la théorie C'est le rythme de la critique du rythme, puisque la théorie, comme la poésie, ne se fait qu'avec l'inconnu.

— Henri Meschonnic, *Critique du rythme*

Abstract At the core of this study is the assumption that the sound of discourse transfers the text from its silent fictional existence to an independent entity that refers, through its linguistic dialect, to a social context outside the text. This assumption makes it possible to move beyond defining prosodic forms merely according to the number of syllables or feet in a line toward an investigation of larger units and meta-constructions of prosodic elements where form and ideological content are inseparable. Following Mikhail Bakhtin, the article defines the phenomenon of metrical hybridization as the simultaneous existence of several voices represented by a mixture of multiple prosodic structures, each referring to a different set of poetic and ideological conventions. Considering examples from Emily Dickinson and Guillaume Apollinaire, I develop a method of analyzing the dialogical relations between the social voices in the hybrid construction.

If, as Meschonnic believes, the study of prosody has its own rhythm, then in the last couple of decades this rhythm can best be characterized as “an-

dante.” Literary theory has explored new ways of thinking about literature — “politics,” “ideology,” and “intertextuality” are only a few of the catch-phrases that reflect new understandings of the ties between the poetic work and the social world. The study of prosody, however, has not kept pace with these developments but has, to a large extent, remained under the influence of structuralist and even new-critical and cognitive approaches. Indeed, prosody is almost the only domain in literary studies today in which forms are defined as if they could be isolated from their cultural modes of creation and ideological content. Therefore, to evoke Meschonnic again, prosody has ceased to represent us.¹

The exclusion of culture and ideology from the physical and structural aspects of form is found even in semiotic “code” theories, which to a large extent, still rely heavily on the traditional understanding of the relationship between the formal and the semantic aspects of prosody. This is the case even in Roland Barthes’s *Mythologies* (1972), one of the first works to suggest (albeit in a footnote) that ideology is part of prosody inasmuch as prosodic form is myth. Barthes’s notion of myth (not to be confused with the dictionary definition of the term) has to do not with its content but with one “sign” structured on top of another sign — in short, a “sign” with a “history.” A sign becomes a signifier (on the level of myth) when it is attached to a signified and creates a new sign. When Barthes claims that “a lot of formalism” gets us back into history,² he refers, I would argue, to the shift from the first level of signifying to secondary coding, as well as to the ideological operations that usually motivate the stratification of the sign. Theoretically, then, Barthes’s work presents ideology as an inseparable part of the process of signification. He insists, however, that for methodological reasons we should continue to separate content and form. Accordingly, discussions of ideology should not be part of semiotics:

The danger, on the contrary, is to consider forms as ambiguous objects, half form and half-substance, to endow form with the substance of form. . . . Semiology,

1. *Ideology* is used here in its broadest sense to refer to a set of ideas affiliated with a certain social group. Keeping in mind Terry Eagleton’s famous list of seventeen definitions of ideology, my definition of rhythm will follow in the main his description of ideology as “a body of ideas characteristic of a particular social group or class,” but this will not be my only use of the term. I will also refer to the process of producing these meanings, to “that which offers a position for the subject,” and to “identity thinking” (Eagleton 1991: 1–2). I believe that the context will provide sufficient information to establish whether I am referring to the process, the set of ideas, or to identity thinking.

2. “Less terrorized by the spectre of ‘formalism,’ historical criticism might have been less sterile; it would have understood that the specific study of forms does not in any way contradict the necessary principles of totality and history. On the contrary: the more a system is specifically defined in its forms, the more amenable it is to historical criticism. To parody a well-known saying, I shall say that a little formalism turns one away from history, but that a lot brings one back to it” (Barthes 1972: 112).

once its limits are settled, is not a metaphysical trap: it is a science among others, necessary but not sufficient. The important thing is to see that the unity of an explanation cannot be based on the amputation of one or other of its approaches, but, as Engels said, on the dialectical coordination of the particular science it makes use of. This is the case with mythology: it is a part both of semiology inasmuch as it is a formal science, and of ideology inasmuch as it is an historical science: it studies ideas-in-forms. (1972: 112)

While Barthes's argument against studying forms as ambiguous objects is methodological, other studies of prosody and ideology claim that the distinction between form and content is a result of a theoretical simplification of the semiotic procedures that occur in poetic discourses. They present form as a signifier and ideas as signified. In her theory of the metrical code, for example, Annie Finch (1993) places herself at the impossible intersection of feminist studies, Eichenbaum's formal method, and Barthes's theory of myths, without settling the contradictions in the meta-theoretical grounds of these three sources. Finch's integration overlooks several important issues. For example, how can Eichenbaum's methodology (based on the primacy of form and the exclusion of history and ideology) be used for presenting the feminist understanding of these concepts as mutually implicated with form and with language itself? Finch's theory (more than her readings) turns Barthes's idea that history is part of double coding in myth into a simple binary relation between history as signified and meter as signifier. This enables her to present metrical code theory as an intersection of contradictory, incommensurable domains.

The same simplification of Barthes's theory of myth can be found in Easthope's (1983) discussion of iambic pentameter. Again, pentameter is presented as the signifier and certain (literary) ideologies are described as its signified. The section on pentameter and ideology however, does not apply the theoretical assumptions Easthope presents elsewhere in the book. In several chapters Easthope questions the very use of the metaphor of 'form as signifier' and 'content as signified,' arguing that "'content' and 'form' cannot be separated, whether as ideological practice and signifying practice, or as the ideological and the aesthetic. . . . Signifieds, whether as meanings 'on the page' or as ideology, are simply not to be found lying around apart from their signifiers. . . . Ideology can no longer be ghettoized as belonging only or mainly to the signified" (1983: 22–23). In the next section, where I discuss M. M. Bakhtin's definitions of voice and double voice and present the concept of metrical hybridization,³ I argue that metrical hybridization

3. The term *rhythmical ambiguity* was proposed by Harshav in his article "On Free Rhythm in Modern Poetry" (1959: 181). The understanding of prosodic choices as determined by historical and social context more even than by linguistic factors has suggested itself in almost

is an example of a concept that “frees ideology from its ghetto” and merges social context with technical form. In the third section, I look at Bakhtin’s early work on rhythm, self, and other, and then I apply it, in the fourth section, to an interpretation of the social dialogues created by metrical hybrid constructions in poems by Emily Dickinson.

1. Voice, Double Voice, and Metrical Hybridization

“Voice” is a perfect example of a theoretical concept which describes prosody as form and content. When discussing a literary voice, we consider the audible aspect of the text as forming an identity, a subject with certain characteristics and social affiliations. Voice is one of the most thoroughly examined concepts in the literary criticism of the last few decades (see, for example, Bialostosky 1989:140–48; James 1994; Farrell 1996; and Crumbley 1987). The extent and scope of its use have expanded it far beyond Bakhtin’s philosophy and inflated the application of related concepts such as ‘polyphony’ or ‘dialogue.’ As Paul de Man (1989: 105–14) notes, part of the term’s attraction for opposing theories lies in a contradiction within Bakhtin’s work itself.⁴

The extension of the term made it available for the criticism of poetry. On a strict reading, Bakhtin’s “polyphony,” “dialogue,” and “multi-voiced” structures usually refer only to prose genres and even more specifically to the novel (1981: 259–422). The flexible use of these concepts for interpreting poetic discourses proved their fruitfulness in the flourishing of new and innovative approaches to the poems of John Keats, Emily Dickinson, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Wallace Stevens, and many others (Davidson 1983: 141–

all of Harshav’s articles on the development of Hebrew and Yiddish prosodies (see, for instance, 1981).

4. In “Dialogue and Dialogism,” Paul de Man (1989: 105–14) asks why so many critics from different fields feel they have “a legitimate claim on Bakhtin’s dialogism as congenial or even essential to their enterprise.” De Man suggests that Bakhtin’s own definition contains a contradiction that enables opposing theories to use his terms: on the one hand, dialogism is defined as a metalinguistic, formal structure; on the other, it provides a recognition of ex-topy, or otherness. In other words, dialogism refers both to a device in which the author is the center of the text and to a very different position as well, in which the different “voices” regard each other as “others.” I see the difference between these two positions in the shift from stressing language and social structure to emphasizing culture and ideological units. In the second view, the relations between fiction and fact are no longer relevant (we lose the distinction between the author as real and the characters as fictional). Bakhtin sometimes conveys the impression that one can proceed from one kind of dialogism to the other. However, it is not clear if he manages to make this shift in his own writings: “Whether the passage from otherness to the recognition of the other—the passage, in other words, from dialogism to dialogue—can be said to take place in Bakhtin as more than a desire, remains a question for Bakhtin interpretation to consider in a proper critical spirit” (ibid.: 110).

50; Richter 1990: 9–28; Shakinovsky 1990: 199–215). However, in some cases the “easy” adaptation of Bakhtin’s methodology to poetic discourse came at the price of overlooking some important issues.

What makes Bakhtin’s definition of voice important, if problematic, for the prosodic theories is that he does not reduce voice to a metaphor for the discursive rendition of a particular consciousness, but rather claims that a character’s identity is presented through the actual sound of his or her speech. Prosodic characteristics function precisely as this type of voice. The sound of the discourse transfers the voice from its silent fictional existence to an independent entity that refers (through its linguistic dialect) to a social context outside the text by identifying the speaker as belonging to the social class/category associated with that dialect. The voice is the actual “speaking personality, the speaking consciousness; it always has a will or desire behind it, its own timbre and overtones” (Bakhtin 1981: 434). This aspect of voice has power because it shapes the concept as a junction between form and content, potentially permitting a discussion of prosodic structures as materializing a voice with its own will and ideology.

From the idea of voice Bakhtin develops his theory of the novel, sketching a number of possible structures which present more than one voice. The poetic work can present a variety of voices by positioning them next to each other, so that each verbal segment is marked as belonging to a certain voice. Another, more complicated method for combining voices is defined by Bakhtin as “double voice.” In double-voiced discourse two or more voices are presented simultaneously in a single concrete utterance. Bakhtin’s definition of hybridization as a device for creating double voice is as follows: “What we call hybrid construction is an utterance that belongs, by its grammatical (syntactic) and compositional markers, to a single speaker, but that actually contains mixed within it two utterances, two speech manners, two styles, two ‘languages,’ two semantic and axiological belief systems. 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 epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor.” (1981: 304, 358). Although the sound of the verbal work is an important part of the definition of voice, when Bakhtin discusses the discursive structures which create double voice he seems to consider prosodic forms as preventing the second voice from being materialized. According to Bakhtin, any intentional structuring of phonemes, any unity or construction of sounds, can present only one voice. Prosodic structures shape the poem as monological, “poetry, and in particular poetic rhythm, tends to reduce multiple voices to a single voice” (1981: 249). The language of the poem can include references to other

languages (and voices), it can quote or even ventriloquize “others” but not be “an other.” Unlike prose, it cannot present two voices in the very same words and speech. Bakhtin does not completely dismiss the possibility of an occasional double voice in poetic discourse but claims that “there is no soil to nourish the development of such [double voice] discourse in the slightest mindful or essential way” (1981: 325). Thus, poetry is more likely to create double meaning within one voice and one pure language, and prose can present several “languages” through one voice in hybrid construction.

This article presents a challenge to Bakhtin’s argument.⁵ I will discuss a construction I call “metrical hybridization” and show that hybridization, although not a typical poetic form, can occur in poetry through rhythm and prosody when one considers these as ideological concepts. A mixture of two, or more, prosodic structures, each referring to a different set of poetic and ideologic conventions can and does create double voice. Actually, prosodic constructions are one of the few linguistic attributes that can directly make the voice of the other heard and sound within the voice of the speaker/narrator, a quality which is crucial to the definition of double voice.

A short poem by Apollinaire offers an example of metrical hybrid construction. This is not one of Apollinaire’s “conversation” poems, where the intertextuality of voices is declared and explicit, but one of his minor poems, in which double voice is less expected. Apollinaire’s poetry was one of the milestones in the development of free verse. In the following poem, however, he returns to the form of the alexandrine and rhymed verse to create two socially distinct voices. Apollinaire is not confronting the old form here; rather, he takes advantage of the alexandrine’s association with “high” genres and with “poetic language.” This is not declared directly in the poem but suggests itself, opening the text to interpretations which do not take the poet as the origin of meaning (a position advocated in Barthes’s “The Death of the Author” [1988: 167–171]). The poem emphasizes that, contrary to what Bakhtin claims, double voice in poetry does not always collapse into a monologue. My discussion relies heavily on Bakhtin’s definition of hybridization as a simultaneous construction of form and content as well as on

5. As Eskin writes, Bakhtin’s definition of poetry as a monological discourse has often been questioned (2000: 379–80). Some critics have dismissed Bakhtin’s argument, claiming that poetry is dialogical (for example, Crumbley 1997), while others have tried to interpret Bakhtin in a way that allows dialogical poetry. Eskin (2000: 390), for example, writes that “while Bakhtin may or may not be right with regard to the ‘constructional’ monologicity of certain poetic texts, he certainly allows for the polyphony of other, prosacized poetic texts, especially, as he notes, for poetic texts produced in the twentieth century.” A number of critics have tried to use the monological/dialogical dichotomy to classify poetic genres; Richter (1990) and Bialostosky (1989) have suggested that narrated monologues are “prosaic poems” which tend to be less monological than other poems.

his definition of voice, but unlike Bakhtin, I believe that prosodic form can have “social” and “ideological” references. Apollinaire’s poem “Automne” exemplifies how, through the device of metrical hybridization, prosody can voice two social languages (in this instance, that of aristocrats and that of the common people):

Automne

Dans le brouillard s’en vont un paysan cagneux
 Et son bouef lentement dans le brouillard d’automne
 Qui cache les hameaux pauvres et vergogneux
 Et s’en allant là-bas le paysan chantonne
 Une chanson d’amour et d’infidélité
 Qui parle d’une bague et d’un coeur que l’on brise
 Oh! l’automne l’automne a fait mourir l’été
 Dans le brouillard s’en vont deux silhouettes grises.⁶

There are two voices in this poem—that of the speaker and that of the peasant. Each of them is singing a song and the songs are very different. The speaker’s song is original in its description of autumn. The peasant is probably singing a folk song which, as we are told in the second stanza, includes a certain blend of clichés (love, infidelity, a broken heart). In the first two stanzas we do not hear the peasant singing. He is referred to in a third person pronoun and exists only in the discourse of the speaker. But after Apollinaire defines the two voices, he lets them sing together, clashing their poetic languages, which socially belong to two different classes. The line “Oh! l’automne l’automne a fait mourir l’été” is presented as part of the speaker’s (poet’s) discourse. The metrical structure (alexandrine), the rhymes, and the absence of quotation marks or other forms of punctuation suggest that the same voice we heard in the first two stanzas continues to speak in the third. However, other signs indicate that the line belongs to the peasant song. The most obvious one is that the diction contains the most conventional clichés about autumn. Moreover, the tone changes and becomes much more chansonlike (especially the “Oh!” and the repetition of

6. Translated from French by W. S. Merwin (Merwin 1982: 17)

A bowlegged peasant and his ox receding
 Through the mist slowly through the mist of autumn
 Which hides the shabby and sordid villages
 And out there as he goes the peasant is singing
 A song of love and infidelity
 About a ring and a heart which someone is breaking
 Oh the autumn the autumn has been the death of summer
 In the mist there are two gray shapes receding.

“l’automne”) and, finally, the line rhymes with the only other line about the content of the peasant’s song (l’été/d’infidélité). Semantically the line belongs to the two voices; it relates to the peasant’s poem as a conventional metaphor of the death of summer, as the death of love’s joy, and of course, it belongs to the speaker’s voice singing of autumn. In the third stanza, the meter, the rhyme, and the tone—all traditionally poetic devices—create hybridization by pointing through the same words to two different social classes (and poetic genres) simultaneously.

In “Discourse in the Novel” Bakhtin claims that prosodic structures, and rhythm in particular, can destroy heteroglossia.⁷ “Rhythm,” he says, “by creating an unmediated involvement between every aspect of the accentual system of the whole (via the most immediate rhythmic unities), destroys in embryo the social worlds of speech and of persons that are potentially embedded in the word: in any case, rhythm puts definite limits on them, does not let them unfold or materialize. Rhythm serves to strengthen and concentrate even further the unity and hermetic quality of the surface of poetic style, and of the unitary language that this style posits.” (1981: 298). Apollinaire’s poem can serve as a counter-example to Bakhtin’s claims. Double voice (in prose and poetry) relies not so much on the heteroglossia of everyday language as on the heteroglossia within poetic languages (or styles). Rhythm might “destroy in embryo the social worlds of natural speech” but, in contradiction to what Bakhtin argues, rhythm can be used to reveal the stratification of language in poetry. I do not mean to argue that poetic language exists in isolation from everyday language but merely that poetic forms represent different poetic styles and that these styles differ from each other in their social and ideological affiliations. Prose fiction, after all, also does not present “real” language but rather representations of this language. Language dialogism in poetry is rooted, among other things, in the fact that forms are social and ideological. Bakhtin (1981: 300) realized this but dismissed it as irrelevant to hybridization, claiming that “of course, even the poetic word is social, but poetic forms reflect lengthier social processes, i.e. those tendencies in the social life requiring centuries to unfold.” The historical length of the process seems to me less important than the fact that in every given historical moment, the poet can choose between different styles, each presenting a different tone, voice, rhythm, and accordingly a different ideological position; and that these can be grafted together in hybrid con-

7. He defines heteroglossia as “the base condition governing the operation of meaning in any utterance. It is that which insures the primacy of context over text. At any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions—social, historical . . . that will insure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions” (Holquist 1981: 428).

struction. On this specific point I totally agree with Meschonnic's criticism of Bakhtin. "Dans son antipoétisme," Meschonnic (1982: 449) writes, "Bakhtin oublie que tout discours porte son historicité. Pouchkine prosaisait le vers. Baudelaire prosaisait le contre. Hugo dérythmait contre. Mallarmé hypersyntaxisait contre. Apollinaire inventait le poème-conversation. . . . Mais Bakhtin vise l'unicité du langage poétique."

By presenting hybridization through prosody I tried to maintain the notion of voice as a speaking subject who is not merely quoted or summarized in the language of the main speaker, but is materialized by its own voice. I tend to agree with Bakhtin that hybridization is more common in prose, while for poetry, especially lyric poetry, it is harder to escape the illusion of unification of voice. Even in modern and postmodern poetry of the "Pound tradition," the encyclopedia of genres and dialects often collapses into a presentation of heteroglossia within one voice. However, as noted above, Bakhtin limits the role of rhythm, rhyme, and so forth to their aesthetic aspects, ignoring the social, historical and ideological affiliations of prosodic conventions. The combination of voice and prosody—as content, not only as form or effect—enables us to define metrical hybridization as a construction which presents prosodic form and content as one. It helps us understand prosody as a social phenomenon, social throughout its entire range and in each and every one of its elements.⁸

The possibility of "hearing" two voices within one linguistic unit calls for a discussion of the relations between the two voices, determining whether metrical hybridization is a device controlled by the author or one that results from the nature of the prosodic aspects of poetic discourse. In the following section I will try to confront this problem by looking at the dialogic relations between voices in other cases of metrical hybridizations. To define these relations, I refer to the voices as either self or other and try to determine the degree to which the other can be perceived not only as an object but as a subject. Before turning to some examples, I discuss the relations between self, other, and rhythm in Bakhtin's early works to help define metrical hybridization as relations between self and other and establish the criteria for differentiating between degrees of freedom of the other's voice in various manifestations of this construction.

8. See the opening statement of "Discourse in the Novel": "Form and content in discourse are one, once we understand that verbal discourse is a social phenomenon—social throughout its entire range and in each and every of its factors, from the sound image to the furthest reaches of abstract meaning" (Bakhtin 1981: 259).

2. Rhythm and Otherness in Bakhtin

In many of Bakhtin's works, rhythm is more than a prosodic form. It represents order, convention, and social expectations; accordingly, it is always contrasted with the other's freedom. Whereas in Bakhtin's later carnivalesque period "it is precisely the rhythms of the collective that promise salvation," in "Discourse in the Novel" rhythm stands in opposition to pluralism. In his early work, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity (1990)," rhythm has two values: it forms the other's soul—and as such is a gift—but it also serves to impose boundaries and social controls from which the hero must escape.

One can distinguish between two main usages of the term rhythm in Bakhtin's "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity" (1990). The first use refers to poetic rhythm and it is Bakhtin's prototypical example of aesthetic form.⁹ Whenever an example of aesthetic form is given, it is usually rhythmic form.¹⁰ Rhythm, Bakhtin writes again and again, aestheticizes an event by marking the author's reaction to it, by unifying it and isolating it from reality (1990: 217). This kind of isolation is very different from the formalist notion of "defamiliarization" (*ostranenie*). It involves two consciousnesses and not merely the work and the addresser/addressee; it is not an activity limited to what we define as artistic. As Morson and Emerson (1990: 81) argue, "[F]ormalist devices isolate raw material, not meaningful content. And material can never mediate between the cognitive and the ethical spheres, so it can never play an essential role in aesthetic experience."

The second use of the word rhythm in "Author and Hero" refers to "metaphysical rhythm." Most contemporary readers would be skeptical of this use. It is discussed in a large section of "Author and Hero" which is devoted to a distinction between the spatial and temporal forms of the hero/other, a distinction correlated with the conventional separation between body and soul. The body occupies space and thus has a spatial form, while the soul has no external image and can be recognized and unified only by its continuity from the moment of birth to the moment of death. Thus, the soul has a temporal existence formed by a certain rhythm. Rhythm, as ordering time

9. Bakhtin (1990: 89) defines "aesthetic event" and "aesthetic form" as follows: "In aesthetic event, we have to do with a meeting of two consciousnesses which are in principle distinct from each other, and where the author's consciousness, moreover, is related to the hero's consciousness not from the standpoint of its objective makeup, its validity as an object, but from the standpoint of its subjectively lived unity; and it is this, the hero's own consciousness, that is concretely localized and embodied . . . and lovingly consummated."

10. His regarding rhythm as the prototypical poetic form is not surprising given the dominance of Russian poetry at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, and given the major literary scholars working in Russia at the time (Smirnov, Zhirmunsky, Eikhenbaum, Jakobson, and others).

in musical and poetic arts, is taken almost metaphorically to be the ordering of the temporal existence of the soul.¹¹ According to Bakhtin (1990: 110): “The life of a concrete, determinate other is organized by me essentially in time (in those cases, of course, where I do not abstract his actions or his thoughts from his personality)—not in chronological time, nor in mathematical time, but in the emotional and axiological ponderable time of lived life that is capable of becoming a musical-rhythmic time.” The necessity of axiological relations to the creation of soul turns the formation of inner life, according to Bakhtin, into an aesthetic reaction. The experiences of the other, once transposed to the self, differ from the way the other viewed them: “[T]he axiological center of his [the other’s] life and the axiological center of my vision of his life do not coincide. In the event of being, this mutual axiological contradiction cannot be annihilated” (1990: 129). The formation of the soul is, then, “its death as much as its birth” when viewed from within its own space. It is the birth of the soul and the only way we can view ourselves from “outside,” but it is also what Bakhtin calls the “death of meaning.”¹²

Paradoxically, lyrical works reflect social ideology even more than other genres do. The author can reflect on himself from an axiological point only when he adopts the norms and conventions of his culture. As Bakhtin (1990: 170) writes: “Lyrical self-objectification is a seeing and hearing of myself from within the emotional eyes of the other and in the emotional voice of the other: . . . In order to make my lived experience sound lyrically, I need to feel in it not my solitary answerability, but my own naturalness as value; I need to feel the other in my self, my own passiveness in the possible chorus of others—in the chorus which has closed around me on all sides and has screened off, as it were, the immediate and urgent task constituted by the unitary and unique event of being.” To use Bakhtin’s wonderful metaphor, the author joins the chorus, and the chorus becomes the soul which takes over the lyrical I. The lyrical I lives completely in patterns which represent social order (Morson and Emerson 1990: 193–94).

11. In Bakhtin’s conceptual system, the inner life of the other is the “soul,” as opposed to “spirit,” which is the inner life of the self.

12. As Bakhtin (1990: 117) writes: “The experience must recede into the absolute past, into the past of meaning, along with the entire context of meaning into which it was inseparably woven and in which it received meaning. . . . It is only in this condition that the inward course of action can be secured, determined, lovingly consolidated and measured by rhythm, and that is accomplished only by the self activity of another’s soul, within the encompassing meaning and value of this other soul. For myself, none of my lived experiences and striving can recede into the absolute past. . . . Insofar as I find myself in a given lived experience . . . I connect it with the future—the future of meaning . . . as long as I am the one living in it, it does not yet exist in full. This brings us up directly to the problem of rhythm. Rhythm is the axiological ordering of what is inwardly given or present at hand.”

The difference between Bakhtin's two uses of the word rhythm¹³ is in the material it works on and not in its function. In both cases rhythm functions in the same way to organize meaningful temporal units (units of sound or of events of inner life), arrange them in a repeated pattern, and aestheticize the object by presenting, through this construction, an axiological reaction to the event. In other words, what metaphysical rhythm does to the other's soul, poetic rhythm does to the other's voice. The two concepts meet where soul and voice meet: the stylization and control of voice are translated by us into a poet's temporal organization of the hero's reactions to things, namely, the author's reaction to the other's inner life. However, Bakhtin does not account for the main differences between his two applications of this notion—in poetry, rhythm is what unifies and gives closure to an event, while in the case of metaphysical rhythm the closure is a precondition for the existence of rhythm.¹⁴

13. As to why Bakhtin chose to use the term rhythm, and not meter, there are, in my opinion, a number of reasons. Rhythm is a more general, less schematic form and as such it seems more appropriate for the "metaphysical" function. Rhythm can be considered as the distinctive feature of poetry (both necessary and sufficient), while meter can be found only in some poems.

14. Bakhtin deliberately blurs the distinctions between the two applications. He uses the word rhythm regarding the soul as if he were employing it literally and as if the soul were actually formed by sound and bits of rhythm (the epigraph to this article may be the best example of this deliberate confusion). Furthermore, Bakhtin's choice of adjectives and adverbs in discussing rhythm exposes a further complexity in his terminology. The paragraphs on rhythm strike the reader as extremely poetical and emotional. Rhythm is "a gift," the other is "secured, determined, lovingly consolidated and measured by rhythm," rhythm is "hopeless," it creates "the tones of a requiem," it has "sorrowfully joyful lightness," and finally, when it forms the other in an artistic discourse, it has "a kind of cherishing hopelessness" as it "justifies and consummates the soul in eternal memory" (Bakhtin 1990: 112–32). More than any other aspect of Bakhtin's inquiry into rhythm, it is his language that places his definition of the term as far as possible from any technical, linguistic definition. The extreme use of metaphors enables the transition from the lexical meaning of rhythm to the description of its metaphysical role. These metaphors also serve as the key to understanding how Bakhtin's emotional reaction to rhythm changes as his ideology progresses. In 1920 boundaries can still be viewed as harmless, and even as positive, for they create "beauty" (1990: 91). They mirror and reflect for us our soul (which we cannot compose by ourselves from within), and they define what we need to avoid in order to have "a future of meaning." But by 1934, when "Discourse in the Novel" is written, and when communism in its Stalinist incarnation gives new meanings to singing within a chorus, these boundaries become threatening. The chorus ceases to represent love and warmth and Bakhtin is starting to hear the voices scream, breaking the silence he once so cherished.

Thus, while in Bakhtin's earlier works rhythm is the perfect example of aesthetic form, in the later works it seems to stand in opposition to arguments for polyphony. Early on, rhythm represents unification, closure, axiological reaction, and so forth and denies the other's existence as a free subject. Furthermore, by following the conventions of rhythm, the poet may lose even his own freedom to the chorus (the axiological social reaction to his inner self). This does not explain Bakhtin's aggressive attack on poetry as monological discourse, but

While Bakhtin's arguments in the early works do not contradict the phenomenon I called metrical hybridization, they do raise the question of the nature of the relation between the two voices in the hybrid construction. When Bakhtin's early work on rhythm (and the aesthetic function in general) is read against 1934's "Discourse in the Novel," the aesthetic function described in "Author and Hero" becomes merely one kind of relation between self and other—that of "passive double voice." In passive double voice discourse, the author or speaker controls the discourse of the other and allows it to be heard only in so far as it serves his specific purposes (Bakhtin 1981). However, as I will demonstrate, metrical hybrid constructions differ tremendously in the relation they present between the voices. Apollinaire's poem exemplified the hybridization of two subjects, neither controlling the other (the degree to which these two voices can be interpreted as subordinated to the author's voice is, of course, a matter of conventions of reading and interpretation). In my next examples—from Emily Dickinson's work—the social status of the speaker redefines the self/other positions in the metrical hybrid construction.

3. Self, Other, and Metrical Hybridization in Poems by Emily Dickinson

Combining male and female voices in a hybrid construction can create a distinct metrical self/other relation. The following examples look at the delicate and complex relations between the feminine and masculine voices skillfully presented in Emily Dickinson's hybrid constructions.

Dickinson's poetry is widely understood as "a poetry of voices" (Shakinovsky 1990; Crumbley 1997: 115). Shakinovsky (1990: 199–215) regards the voices as different aspects of the speaker's I formed by a variety of social expectations (and the poetic conventions that suit them), as well as by Dickinson's rejection of these expectations. The poems seem to thematize the question of the extent to which inner voices can engage in a free dialogue; in other words, we are made to wonder whether the fact that these voices are presented as parts of the author's lyrical I binds them into one voice, albeit a divided and split one. Furthermore, some of the voices often identified as the lyrical I are what Bakhtin (1990: 171) would call "voices outside the chorus" and they flaunt their otherness not only from each other but from the social/poetic norms. They use lyric poetry to sing/scream outside the chorus and not only to join "the music of the tribe." In many cases, the voices present themselves thematically as being victimized. According to

it does help us understand why rhythm is presented as contributing to the destruction of heteroglossia in poetic language.

Cristanne Miller (1987: 156), “the most common plot in Dickinson’s poems involves a speaker who is victim of some monstrous power, usually ambiguously sexual or romantic and usually specifically male.” This creates an interesting interplay between the speaker as subject and the external social hegemony as subject (which at times receives a male personification). In other words, the speaker in the poem is by definition the self who is aestheticizing the other, but being himself marginalized, he cannot escape presenting himself also as viewed by his own other, he cannot escape his own otherness. In many cases, the speaker is involved in a hidden dialogue:¹⁵ “Imagine a dialogue of two persons in which the statements of the second speaker are omitted, but in such a way that the general sense is not at all violated. The second speaker is present invisibly, his words are not there, but deep traces left by these words have determining influence on all the present and visible words of the first speaker. We sense that this is a conversation, although only one person is speaking, and it is a conversation of the most intense kind” (James 1994: 171).

When metrical hybridization occurs, the hidden existence of the second consciousness is felt through prosodic traces, so that although the lyrical poem declares itself a monologue, two or more voices actually join the main speaker to create an audible impression of a dialogue. Returning to Bakhtin on rhythm, and to our discussion of degrees of freedom in metrical hybridization, let us look at the relations between the speaker and the hidden voice in one of Dickinson’s poems:

To know just how He suffered—would be dear—
 To know if any Human eyes were near
 To know He could entrust His wavering gaze—
 Until it settled broad—on Paradise
 To know if He was patient—part content—
 Was Dying as He thought—or different
 Was it a pleasant Day to die—
 And did the Sunshine face His way—
 What was His furthest mind—Of Home—or God
 Or what the Distant say—
 At news that He ceased Human Nature
 Such a Day—

15. Although this characterizes Dostoevsky’s works, according to Bakhtin, it seems applicable to discussions of dramatic monologues and, in a very different way, to feminist readings. In her essay “On veult response avoir: Pernette au Guillet’s dialogic poetics,” James discusses Prenetter du Guillet’s poetry in terms of Bakhtin’s hidden dialogism (James 1994).

And Wishes—Had He Any—
 Just His Sigh—Accented—
 Had been legible—to Me—
 And was He Confident until
 Ill fluttered out—in Everlasting Well—
 And if He spoke—What name was Best—
 What last
 What One broke off with
 At the Drowsiest—
 Was He afraid—or tranquil—
 Might He know
 How Conscious Consciousness—could grow
 Till Love that was—and Love too best to be—
 Meet—and the Junction be Eternity.
 (Dickinson 1987: 306–7)

To understand the relations between the two voices in the poem we need to look at Dickinson's choice of meter. Lindberg-Syersted (1968: 130–31) describes her meters as: "basically those of English hymnody, particularly the hymns collected in Issac Watts's *Christian Psalmody* . . . which were familiar to her from childhood. Like Watts, she favors the so-called 'Common meter', that is a metrical pattern of alternating lines of eight and six syllables arranged in iambs, with the rhyme scheme xaya, or less often, abab." This metrical pattern was generally viewed as "equivalent to ballad meter, and as such its roots go far back in English literary history." According to Lindberg-Seyersted, "[I]t has been claimed that the four beat line of Old English poetry seems to be inherent in the structure of the language itself, and that it continues in most nursery rhymes and ballads" (ibid.: 131).

Emily Dickinson's use of meter is discussed in detail in Annie Finch's 1993 book, *The Ghost of Meter*. According to Finch, Dickinson was not the first lyric poet to resist the five foot lines (Blake and Wordsworth did so before her). She was, however, the first canonical woman writer to resist using them because they represented a poetic tradition which, for the most part, was written by male poets and had a masculine voice. Dickinson did not choose to write in a different meter because it suited certain feelings or ideas she wanted to express; she used her unique form for almost all of her topics—love, death, nature, and so forth. Thus, her choice of the hymn meter (four–three iambs) was the choice of an "antimeter." She "appears to have scrupulously avoided five stress lines except . . . where iambic pentameter evokes patriarchal concepts, particularly Christianity and traditional patriarchal poetic and other 'author'ity" (ibid.: 22).

Choosing the hymn meter enabled Dickinson to create not only a feminine voice but a voice which suits the “small, weak, uncertain” (Miller 1987: 167) speakers in her poetry. Dickinson’s meter is hybrid in the sense that it merges a feminine voice with a voice of the common people in its prosodic roots in the ballad, and with a childish voice in its intertextual relations to the meter of children’s songs. As Nina Baym (1977: 207–8) argues, “[T]he child persona in Dickinson can be read both as the child within human beings generally or more specifically as the child within the woman, the child that the woman is alleged to be and, crucially in Dickinson’s case, the child that the woman is felt to be.” According to Baym (*ibid.*: 208) and to Miller (1987: 154–86), both the woman and the child personas are opposed in the poem to the masculine figure. This opposition is supported by Dickinson’s choice of meter. While the hymn meter is usually used to create the speaker’s voice, Finch (1993) shows that Dickinson iambic pentameter lines are all semantically related to the male/Christian authority.

This is the case in poem 622, in which the rejected pentameter returns as the voice of the male tradition; the pentameter becomes a way to let the language and consciousness of the masculine figure into the poem and to confront it directly. It is “the deep trace” of the other’s voice. In her mastery of form, Dickinson turned her rejection of the dominant meter because of its ideological implications into an advantage by actually including the voice of the other through a prosodic hybrid construction.

The speaker in the poem tries to imagine and to understand the moment of a male friend’s death. Through a series of question she attempts to enter his thoughts, to follow the movement of his last gaze, to picture how he perceived his death—was it as he thought, was he patient? In the first three stanzas of the poem, the syntax is typical of Dickinson, albeit somewhat less paratactic than usual and containing fewer enjambments. The primary difference in these stanzas from the rest of the poem can be found in the metrical scheme. The first six lines of the poem are rare examples of iambic pentameter. These lines are followed by two tetrameters. The third stanza opens and ends with a pentameter (if, according to the rhyme *say/day*, we count lines three and four as one prosodic unit). The metrical scheme, then, includes longer lines than we expect in a poem by Dickinson. Dickinson creates a hybrid construction by combining her own stylistic practice, through which she expresses her feminine voice, with what represents for her a masculine poetic language—long, hermetic, poetic lines. Within a discourse that is presented as if spoken by a feminine figure, she creates the sound of the other’s voice, a voice which in this poem is more authoritative, external, and unified than her own. The tetrameter lines in the second and third stanzas serve as a prolepsis of the hymn meter (the three–four iambic scheme

is replaced with four and five iambs), and in this way create a masculine antithesis to Dickinson's own voice.

Stanzas four through six emphasize this point further. Here, the metrical form and the speaker's point of view change. When the meter of the poem changes, the syntax becomes more fragmented and the rhyme pattern is lost, revealing the emotional turmoil of the speaker's consciousness. The change is gradual: the woman's voice first appears at the end of the third stanza and grows stronger in the fourth, fifth, and sixth stanzas. The voice of the masculine consciousness ceases to be dominant, and throughout this part of the poem we encounter only a few pentameter lines. The first person pronoun appears for the first time, but only in the object position ("me"). There are implicit questions about the couple's relationship ("And if He spoke — What name was Best / What last"), and finally, in the last few lines, we hear the woman's own thoughts.

In the last line, just as the two consciousnesses join, so do the two meters:

Was He afraid—or tranquil—
 Might He know
 How Conscious Consciousness—could grow
 Till Love that was—and Love too best to be—
 Meet—and the Junction be Eternity.

The last line could be read as iambic pentameter, representing the man's consciousness and voice. But the dashes and the syntax provide a second reading—in which the word "meet" is stressed and the metrical regularity is broken—in which the female consciousness is represented. The reader, who obviously cannot perform the two readings simultaneously, has to pause and apply his or her own interpretation to the line and the poem as a whole.

The metrical hybrid construction enabled Dickinson to move—prosodically—from the sound of the male voice, as his consciousness dominates the poem, to the female's voice, and finally, to a duet of the two voices. The male voice was of course not present as a speaker but only as a hidden figure in an implicit internal dialogue. The voice of the other is neither as free from the speaker's consciousness as in Apollinaire's poem nor a completely passive other. The prosodic variations break the authority of the rhythm that creates one voice unifying the poem, and the distinction between subject and object becomes blurred. The (prosodic and thematic) description of male as authority, the fact that the speaker views and defines herself both through the eyes of this male and in opposition to him, and the fact that in several lines the feminine voice is, moreover, heard through the male prosodic features (his tone and voice), all put the speaker in the position of an object at the same time that her position as the lyrical I places her as

the subject. The dialogue between the metrical voices achieves a two-way play/struggle for authority; by writing from a minor position, both playing the role of chorus and singing outside of it at the same time, Dickinson constructs through rhythm both the subjectivity of the voice of the speaker (or author) and that of an external, social, “other” voice.

In this power struggle within metrical hybridization, silence and absence become extremely important. Shaped as a hidden voice which comes through only in metrical hybridization, the “other” voice carries the authority of knowledge which the speaker lacks, knowledge not only of how he died but of what he thought about the woman speaker and their relationship: knowledge of her as an object or as a soul, to use Bakhtin’s terms. To fill this gap and construct the position of the man as a subject contemplating the speaker, the reader must rely on hints such as the meter and the choice of words in the first sentences. As Lynn Shakinovsky argues, silence becomes a powerful tool for the “victims” in Dickinson’s poetry:

The eccentricity and peculiarity of Dickinson’s collection of bizarre speakers—crazy child, madwoman, dead person, freak, rejected lover, to name but a few—are among their most pervasive characteristics, but what they share most strongly is the capacity for secretiveness. . . . Silence is not only the speakers’ central method of communication (and of withholding information); it is also a method in which they maintain power. . . . These speakers share not only the attribute of silence, but also the motivation for it. Many of them appear to assume their pose of cunning secrecy, and silence in the face of the other whom they perceive as hostile, as characterized by sadism, rage, and rejection. The powerful powerlessness of many of these speakers—their sense of being victimized, persecuted, denigrated, debased, unappreciated, and ignored—manifests itself in the face of the other whom they perceive as threatening. . . . These speakers then are motivated to silence by their sense of the other, of the suppressed hidden presences hovering inside and outside the poem. . . . The attempts to negate the other presence in the poems are attempts to gain monologic power. (1990:199–215)

Although I have many reservations about Shakinovsky’s use of the Bakhtinian term “voice”—a use that seems to be almost identical to “personality” or “character”—I do accept her observation that in some of Dickinson’s poems the speakers attempt to negate the other by depriving him or her of a voice. However, when metrical hybridization occurs, as in poem 622, the authority of this hidden voice is confronted with another kind of silence—that of the speakers themselves, who do not reveal their independent emotions and thoughts directly (as evidenced by the dashes, the concise sentences, and the paratactic grammar). In the prosodic changes from iambic pentameter to the short sentences which seem to express a mean-

ingful silence (a control over emotions), the roles of subject and object and the center of power shift constantly.

Presenting a “minor,” feminine voice does not always lead to the kind of relations we have seen in this poem. Let us look at one more example which demonstrates a very different set of relations from the one created in poem 622. In poem 1736 the pentameter form creates the voice of the “other,” masculine tradition. In this poem, Dickinson’s ideological rejection of the masculine meter is pronounced, almost explicitly thematized. Expressing “an anxiety of influence,” the poet confronts tradition. Dickinson does not use her hymn meter in this poem. Instead, she turns from an iambic pentameter (which begins with an inversion) in the first three lines to a hexameter in the following lines. In the last line Dickinson is almost teasing the metrical tradition by using a very close alternative to both pentameter or hexameter: an iambic septameter. The poem ends with a metrically ambiguous line:

Proud of my broken heart, since thou didst break it,
 Proud of the pain I did not feel till thee

 Proud of my night, since thou with moons dost slake it
 NOT to partake thy passion, *my* humility.

 Thou can’st not boast, like Jesus, drunken without companion
 Was the strong cup of anguish brewed for the Nazarene

 Thou can’st not pierce tradition with the peerless puncture,
 See! I usurped *thy* crucifix to honor mine . . .

In a direct and strong voice the speaker confronts both Christian and poetic tradition. She does not blame these traditions for breaking her heart or for her loneliness but rather shows how much she has gained in her inner exile. She manages to create her own cross and usurps the crucifix with it. The pronouns “my” and “thy” are emphasized (even typographically) to stress the juxtaposition that the poem illustrates.

Part of the poet’s pronounced victory over tradition is that over the iambic pentameter and hexameter, which emblemize authority. The first three lines are written in pentameter but begin with a metrical inversion. Opening these lines with the strongly stressed monosyllabic word “[p]roud” is the first hint of the conscious and ideological rejection of the authoritative traditional meter. Although an inversion does not break the traditional masculine voice, it does create a different diction in the line. The feminine rebellion against the voice of tradition is expressed in the second half of the poem through hexameter lines. The extension of the lines occurs in exactly the same place that her own voice is distinguished from the voice that broke

her heart and caused her pain. “[T]hou” refers to the speaker’s lover, but given the end of the poem, we understand these relations to be a metaphor for the woman’s reaction to the male tradition in general (the choice of the older pronoun “thou” instead of “you” is not accidental). The “humility” expressed in the fourth line is thus the turning point in the poet’s self-perception—she moves from being the weaker sex to having a strong sense of identity.¹⁶

The fourth line starts with a regular iamb, but our expectation of a five foot line is reversed when the poet adds a sixth iamb. The four-syllable word “humility” is presented metrically as a keyword, for it turns the line from pentameter to hexameter. The second half of the poem is indeed in iambic hexameter—a very long, impressive, and “major key” line. The poet demonstrates her mastery of the most celebrated meter—the epic, classical line—and then presents her own voice; a septameter line even longer than the traditional lines. By singing within the chorus, the poet rejects her position as an outsider; and by expanding the metrical line to express an even more serious, ceremonial meter in a major key, she rejects the softer, victimized voice that represents the other’s control over her. The speaker refuses to sing in the voice of “others,” to use Bakhtin’s terms. Instead, she extends the way the others sing about themselves. She becomes a full subject as the voice of tradition turns into the object or the silent subject.

“Thou can’st not pierce tradition with the peerless puncture,” the speaker says, explaining the key to her success. Instead of puncturing tradition, she usurps it, as she demonstrates in the last line. The sentence “I usurped THY crucifix to honor mine!” is an iambic hexameter (beginning with an inversion and a short foot). However, once a stressed syllable is added—the teasing “See!” in the beginning of the line—it immediately turns into a septameter (although the complete line has only twelve syllables, it has seven stresses and therefore seven feet), honoring what, in this poem, represents the feminine voice overcoming the poetic tradition that preceded it. Again, the poem ends with a hybrid construction, including two voices in the same lines. Dickinson, in her brilliant sensitivity, uses an authoritative septameter to show off theatrically (even cynically) her victory over the pentameter and hexameter and all that they represent.

The meter is nothing but ideological—penetrating tradition, it becomes a weapon against the authoritative church, male authority, and literary tradition. It is an excellent example of how a rejection of meter does not exclude the old forms but uses them to create a dialogic tension between them and all that they represent. Dickinson opens poem 1736 with the voice of the

16. On Dickinson’s feminist point of view, see Miller 1987: 160–89.

male canonical tradition and ends it with a victory over that tradition. Unlike her four/three iambic poems, which tend toward silence and minimalism, this poem is powerfully festive and declarative (confronting pentameter in its own field and with its own kind of weapon). In rejecting the weaker position of the voice, Dickinson turns the tables. The hidden other, the tradition, loses its power to dominate (at least metrically) and becomes passive. The dialogue between the voices allows this other much less freedom and power than in poem 622, and of course, even less freedom than exhibited in Apollinaire's poem. In this case, the "other" is the chorus, the poetic conventions and all they represent socially. Dickinson does not sing "outside the chorus," nor does she "scream" within it. She dominates the chorus, conducting prosodically the very same voices that tried to silence her.

4. Conclusions

Bakhtin's work can help us move beyond defining prosodic forms merely according to the number of syllables or feet in a line, and toward an investigation of larger forms of prosodic elements, in which form and content are inseparable. Adapting the term "hybridization" to the meta-construction "metrical hybridization" has enabled me to stress the arguments in Bakhtin's own work regarding the role of sound images in realizing a voice. To use the term without voiding completely Bakhtin's own definitions of voice, double voice, heteroglossia, and even poetry, I extend the term only to cases in which two sets of prosodic conventions, each associated with a different class or social group, are juxtaposed in order to present more than one voice in a single segment. I do not attempt to dismiss Bakhtin's arguments regarding poetry in general, but I do challenge his theories, if only on the grounds that they overlook the social and contextual attributes of prosodic conventions and the possibilities for hybridization that poetic languages (in contrast to poetic language) open.

Bakhtin's early work on meter, self, and other demonstrates another way in which social and historical contexts may enter the poem's forms, especially when more than one voice is present. However, my examples suggest that, in contrast to Bakhtin's claims, there is more than one possible relation between voices in a poem. Rhythm can be used to control the other voice; through metrical hybridization, however, it can also be used to give the other voice a freedom to reflect on and evaluate the speaker. Any such interpretation is of course influenced by the methodology of reading (do we include "extrinsic" information about the author, do we place the author as the center of the text or claim "the author is dead," and so forth?). And, no less importantly, our reading is inevitably infected by our own so-

cial ideology. Every interpretation of prosodic double voice as self/other is a contrapunctal relation between the chorus that sang loudest at the time the poem was written and the chorus in which we sing today.

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