

ENGL 300 Introduction to Theory of Literature
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Passages from Bakhtin and Jauss

Rhetoric is often limited to purely verbal victories over the word [i. e., over ideological authority]; when this happens, rhetoric degenerates into formalistic verbal play. But, we repeat, when discourse is torn from reality, it is fatal for the word itself as well: words grow sickly, lose semantic depth and flexibility, the capacity to expand and renew their meanings in new living contexts—they essentially die as discourse, for the signifying word lives beyond itself, that is, it lives by directing its purposiveness outward. . . [Double-voicedness which is merely verbal] is not structured on authentic heteroglossia but on a mere diversity of voices.

--Bakhtin, fr. *Discourse in the Novel* (in your textbook, p. 587)

[Early Marxist and Formalist methods in common] conceive the *literary fact* within the closed circle of an aesthetics of production and representation. In doing so, they deprive literature of a dimension that inalienably belongs to its aesthetic character as well as to its social function: the dimension of its reception and influence.

--Hans Robert Jauss, fr. *Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory*

[E]ven the critic who judges a new work, the writer who conceives of his work in light of positive or negative norms of an earlier work, and the literary historian who classifies a work in its tradition and explains it historically are first simply readers before their reflexive relationship to literature can become productive again.

--*Ibid.*

[T]he connection between literary evolution and social change does not vanish from the face of the earth through its mere negation. . . . The new literary work is received and judged against the background of the everyday experience of life.

--*Ibid.*