Conclusions

An exploration of philosophic genius and literary monologue retraces shifting intertextual pathways, for as meaning is in general created through differential relations, "criticism is the art of knowing the hidden roads that go from poem to poem."¹ A master trope in the development of "genius" and "monologue" at first appears to be introjection: myths of external divinity are internalized and transformed into the spirit of an individual. Rhetorical awareness unsettles the assumed inner-outer distinction, however, for it demonstrates that these categories depend on types of figuration; genius and monologue accumulate and transform meanings within linguistic systems, and the disjunction between ancient and modern beliefs finds expression in rhetorical differences. Theological and philosophical expressions of genius are replaced by the literary forms of monologue in a movement that is not accessible to traditional intellectual history.

In the context of polytheistic Greek daimones, Homer and Plato move toward more abstract theological language. Alongside theos, the Homeric daimôn is a mysterious term that suggests divinity; Plato refers to the Socratic daimonion, an even more radical synecdoche that re-

places the Olympian gods by "something divine" only negatively experienced by Socrates. Against the background of monotheistic Hebrew YHWH, Philo and rabbinic commentators drift toward esoteric teachings of multiple divine presences, represented by angels. The daemonic gradually takes on evil connotations, as legends of satan multiply.

Modern aesthetics displaces or introjects the divinity associated with creativity. To the extent that eighteenth-century genius retains a theological dimension, it becomes "that god within," linked to conscience. Shaftesbury writes of soliloquy as the force of subjective genius, while Kant unsuccessfully strives to purge genius of its mystical associations. Kant's transcendental philosophy and Husserl's phenomenology attempt to secure the island of pure reason or immanent sphere of consciousness, but Heidegger turns their tropes inside out, transforms the philosophic monad into a literary nomad by redirecting Dasein to metaphysical transcendence, and affirms that "language speaks" beyond the deliberate intentions controlled by speakers.

"Monologue," as a collective term for counternormative swerves, might be viewed as a master trope of intertextuality. While solitary speech is not necessarily deviant, individual speech turns away from unified systems of language. In one sense, then, monologue names the most general phenomenon of literary revisionism. Yet monologue has both formal and material, tropological and topological manifestations. The intertextual development of monologue is a process of revisionary swerves and re-presentations of solitary speech.

From medieval drama to modern narrative, the potential for soliloquy expands in the space cleared by distance from God's revelation. Only demonic spirits remain when Shakespeare's villains find themselves at the mercy of dark powers that appear to emanate from their own hallucinations and dreams. Coleridge carries the conversational mode further, yet his potentially controlled poetic personae repeatedly drift toward "phantom magic" or madness and encounter the monological subversion of norms. Poe makes narrative monologue the focal point of disorienting perspectival illusions. One text swallows itself, another turns itself inside out, and as mad narrators tell cogent tales, the representational pretense erodes. Modernist internal monologue responds to the genius of language, as when Joyce's stream of consciousness becomes a stream of textuality. Antiquity returns in
modern colors when Molly, a literary reincarnation of Athena and Penelope, speaks alone as muse in a language of divine affirmation.

II

Lev Vygotsky writes *Thought and Language* soon after James Joyce and Arthur Schnitzler publish their major works of internal monologue, and he responds explicitly to Jean Piaget's *Le langage et la pensée chez l'enfant* (1923). According to Piaget, the earliest autistic thinking becomes childhood egocentric thinking, which in turn gives way to mature rational thinking. Vygotsky questions Piaget's assumptions by showing that egocentric language is more fundamentally linked to adult internal speech than to autistic inarticulateness; and where Piaget conceives child development as a process of socialization, Vygotsky conceives it as a process of individuation. Vygotsky in some ways reverses the movement Piaget traces from autism to social language and from fantasy to logic. Rather than being reduced to a deficient mode, internal speech that creates anew by turning inward and away from the social becomes the epitome of linguistic development.

Vygotsky increasingly rejects the established external forms of language as he probes deeper into "the inner side of language." Against the unquestioned supremacy of socialization, he posits different linguistic functions such as internal speech, which (unlike external speech) receives its character as language for the speaker alone. In contrast to Piaget, Vygotsky conceives linguistic development as one of gradual individuation, in which the death of egocentric language corresponds to the birth of internal speech. Vygotsky's discussion of internal speech as a special linguistic function includes literary examples. Not only does his analysis touch on phenomena of madness, deviance, and the unconscious, which dominate the expressions of monologue in literature; Vygotsky shows an unexpected link between internal speech and writing.\(^3\)


\(^3\) Vygotsky believes that neither writing nor internal speech conforms to ordinary
Whereas psychology has tended to view human development as a process of bondage to social norms, Vygotsky focuses on a possible liberation. Not intended for voiced communication, internal speech is closely allied with subjectivity and may give rise to a kind of inner dialect. Vygotsky writes that “in our language there is always a hidden thought,” the abbreviated internal speech, analogous to writing in code. Vygotsky’s *Thought and Language* was suppressed during the Soviet purges of 1936, only two years after publication, for it set out on an unpopular path toward theories of individuality in language.

III

Mikhail Bakhtin is the sharpest critic of monologue, which he interprets primarily as the striving for single-voiced philosophical argumentation or literary representation. The monological novel is, according to Bakhtin, dominated by a univocal ideology or worldview that fails to interact with conflicting voices. Although Bakhtin attacks monological forms, his *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* shares with Vygotsky’s *Thought and Language* a special interest in the subjectivity of fictional characters and shows that self-consciousness does not exist as autonomous introspection. Observing that “faith in the self-sufficiency of a single consciousness” characterizes post-Enlightenment literature, Bakhtin argues that this faith is illusory. The forces of “internal” signification are actually external to the subject.

Bakhtin’s approach to dialogue thus makes possible the discovery of an inwardness that is inseparable from relations with others. Echoing Hegel’s conception of self-consciousness, Bakhtin points to internal dialogues “in which the other’s discourse has seized control” (*PDP* 219). Bakhtin’s manuscript notes reconfirm that the supposedly

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social speech (*Denken und Sprechen*, 224); his description of internal speech reflects its essential constitution as a kind of writing. Like the language of dreams, according to Freud’s analyses, the internal language is characterized by condensation (*Verdichtung*). The two poles of Vygotsky’s opposition, abbreviated internal speech and highly developed written language, come together if internal speech is structured like a form of writing in code.


monological "I" depends on dialogical interactions. Bakhtin values Dostoevsky's novels, not because they invent a dialogical type of language, but because they uncover the dissimulated dialogical element that inheres in the word; Dostoevsky represents the individual consciousness dialogically. Had he written on English literature, Bakhtin might have demonstrated that in European traditions from pre-Shakespearean soliloquy to twentieth-century internal monologue, solitary speech depends on a concealed relation to otherness.

Like Hegelian sense certainty, monologue discovers that it mistakes itself to be something that is in fact unattainable. If monologue is a misconception of thought and language, however, it is a delusion that has determined the progress of Western existence and literary art. Commitment to monologue is linked to the "death of God," after which man asserts the legitimacy of monological reason. Bakhtin's work contains an implicit metaphysical impetus, a theology of dialogue: "the very being of man (both external and internal) is the deepest communion" (PDP 287). After encountering the most extreme forms of solitary consciousness, we are impelled to recognize the failure of our monological exertions. The division or decentering of the subject is already implicit in Hegel's master-slave dialectic, the Freudian unconscious, and Heidegger's ec-static Dasein—prophetic voices of a new transcendence.

IV

The intertextual pathways from genius to monologue pass through theological, philosophical, psychological, and literary domains. Classical traditions emphasize the place of divine guidance that becomes unacceptable to enlightened rationalism. In the eighteenth century theology and psychology confront each other, and art chooses the genius of soliloquy as its muse. Yet even the imagination of Kant's "genius" tends to deviate, to wander beyond its innate capacity for exemplary originality. For twentieth-century thought, psychological genius becomes as questionable as was theological genius in the eighteenth century. When contemporary critics demonstrate the inescapable difference from oneself within monologue, deviation becomes a new, errant genius.

From Greek monos + logos, "monologue" derives the meaning of
solitary speech. But the physical solitude of internal speech is philosophically the least significant form of linguistic isolation. When "monologue" is linked to modes of language that swerve from ordinary dialogical speech, the new deviant monologue makes its appearance. Linguistic deviance turns away from norms of speech as genius turns away from norms of artistic creation. But deviation from convention always threatens meaning, for how can an individual invent new forms and still be understood? By asserting an individual style or deviant form of expression, monologue borders on meaninglessness. Literary monologues provide the basis for inquiry into semantic solitude, associated with idiolects that strive to preserve their autonomy while reaching for an elusive otherness.

Introjection makes genius into monologue, and projection reclaims monologue as transcendent genius of language. There is no way to transcend human language and attain the language of God, because "divine speech" is always a trope. Turn away, Moses, and inscribe for yourself two tablets of stone. The ineffable daimonion and YHWH do not permit direct revelation: to see God is to transcend human experience, to die. But to exclude all languages of transcendence, if this were possible, would only be to imprison ourselves in a repetitive world without even the creative sublime of rhetorical play.

Genius and Monologue, to the extent that it reads the palimpsests of genius and monologue, necessarily superimposes several layers of textuality. On the surface, then, this book resembles a mosaic of citations. The originality myth has died, and only a prospect of endless swerves remains. We cling to a mythological Logos that justifies belief in poetry as the site of authenticity, but we know that all writing grafts itself onto preexisting textuality. If the divine Logos is an inaccessible source of inspiration, we can only lose ourselves by error, deviation from the mazes of overtrodden paths.

The new transcendence is a transference, a metapherein that surpasses the present, transforms past figures through imaginative obsessions, and constitutes the self in endless dialogues.

—Everything is always different.
—We repeat.

6 Compare PDP 138, where dialogism is linked to experiences of a person who "has deviated from the general norm" and stands "on the threshold of insanity." As in Hegel's interpretation of Socrates' daimonion, a theological moment is bound up with aberrant psychology.