A Bakhtinian homecoming: Potentials and pitfalls for dialogic pedagogy in a contemporary world

1920's (pub 1981)	Art & Answerability; Philosophy of the act' Author & Hero Problems of content etc (NB also work of Voloshinov and Medvedev)	Philosophical (influenced by Kant, Russian formalism, Marxism, also Nietzche)	Ethics & morality General aesthetics Authorship Ideological becoming
1929 (Pub 1984)	**Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics**	Word, Bakhtin finds his own voice	Dialogism Language Selfhood Ethics Polyphony
1930s (Pub. 1986)	**Discourse in novel Forms of time and chronotype Bildungsroman**	Discursive Analytic	Genre The novel Great time (chronotype) Heteroglossia
1950's (Pub. 1984 & 1986)	**Rabelais and his world Epic and the novel Genres of speech**	Hyperbolic Poetic	Folk rituals Laughter Carnivalesque
1960s-1970s (Pub. 1986)	**Speech genres Methodology for human sciences**	Professional Meditative Metaphilosophial	Nature of humanities Texts Cultural studies Literary history
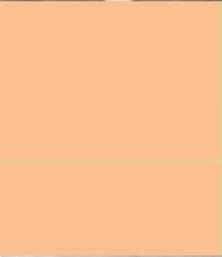
"I see the world from a 'horizon': the world gives itself as immediately around me, as circumscribed by the unique angle of my vision, as a surrounding full of specific meanings determined by my own ends. The other, however, I see as existing in an "environment": the world is the same for him as it is for others, for it is not conditioned by the uniqueness of his intentionality (as is my horizon)"
(Bakhtin, 1990, *Art and Answerability* xxix)

To act ethically towards the other does not mean that the "I" must fully and unconditionally empathise with the other. Rather the "I" projects him – or herself on to the other and empathises actively, but then withdraws to the original position outside to the other and brings the experience to consciousness. This return to one's own unique position in being, from which the other can be objectified, constitutes 'aesthetic activity'…" (Brandist, 2002, p. 39).

White J. Authoring the metaphoric act: The ethical encounter of 'assessing' very young children in dialogic activity. In M. A. Pourkos (ed/s) *Perspectives and Limits of Dialogism in Mikhail Bakhtin: Applications in Psychology, Education, Art and Culture.* University of Crete, 2008. p.183-196.
White, J, Nuttall, J. Expanding intersubjectivity: The potential of Bakhtinian dialogism to inform narrative assessment in early childhood. *The First Years: Ngā Tau Tuatahi.* v9, no1, The University of Auckland, Faculty of Education, 2007. p.21-25.

Excess of seeing

...that author knows and sees more not only in the direction in which the hero is looking and seeing, but also in the different direction, in a direction which is in principle inaccessible to the hero himself; it is precisely this position that an author must assume in relation to the hero

(Bakhtin, 1990, Art and Answerability, p. 13).

- *I owe my freedom from the solipsism of an 'absolute consciousness' (AH p. 22) to my bringing-to-birth in the horizon of the other...his aesthetics is a means of escape from the hegemony of epistemology in so far as it begins from that absolute incommensurabilty of the I and the other that it shares with Christian ethics, and that cognition programmatically denies.*

Pechey, 1998, P. 63

In essence all of Dosteovsky's heroes come together outside of time and space, as two beings in infinity. Their consciousnesses, each with its own world, intersect; their integral fields of vision intersect. At the point where their fields of vision intersect lie the culminating points of the novel. At these points also lie the clamps holding together the novelistic whole (Bakhtin, 1984, Rabelais and his world, p. 277).

- The 'truth' at which the hero must and indeed ultimately does arrive through clarifying the events to himself, can essentially be for Dostoevsky only *the truth of the hero's own consciousness.* It cannot be neutral towards his self-consciousness. In the mouth of another person, a word, or a definition identical in content would take on another meaning and tone, and would no longer be the truth (Bakhtin, 1984, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, p. 55).

- Men do not understand one another by relying on the signs for things nor by causing one another to produce exactly the same concept, but by touching the same link in each other's sense perceptions and concepts, by *striking the same key in each other's spiritual instrument,* whereupon corresponding, but not identical concepts arise in each of them (Cassirer, 1953, p. 160, emphasis added)

Dostoevsky's polyphonic principle (according to Bakhtin)

"never use for objectifying or finalizing another's consciousness anything that might be inaccessible to that consciousness, that might lie outside its field of vision"

(Bakhtin, 1984, p. 278)

Dosteovsky's principal achievement as an artist lies in the creation of a new type of novel called *polyphonic* in contradiction to *homophonic* novels of writers such as Lev Tolstoy, Turgenev, and Goncharov…Characters in such a novel are no longer objects manipulated by the author, as Bakhtin claims they are in a homophonic novel, but subjects coexisting as autonomous worlds with the world of the author and contending with him for the reader's attention. The author expresses himself, then, not so much through one character or another, but chiefly through the structure of the novel…

(Krasnov, 1980, p. 5).
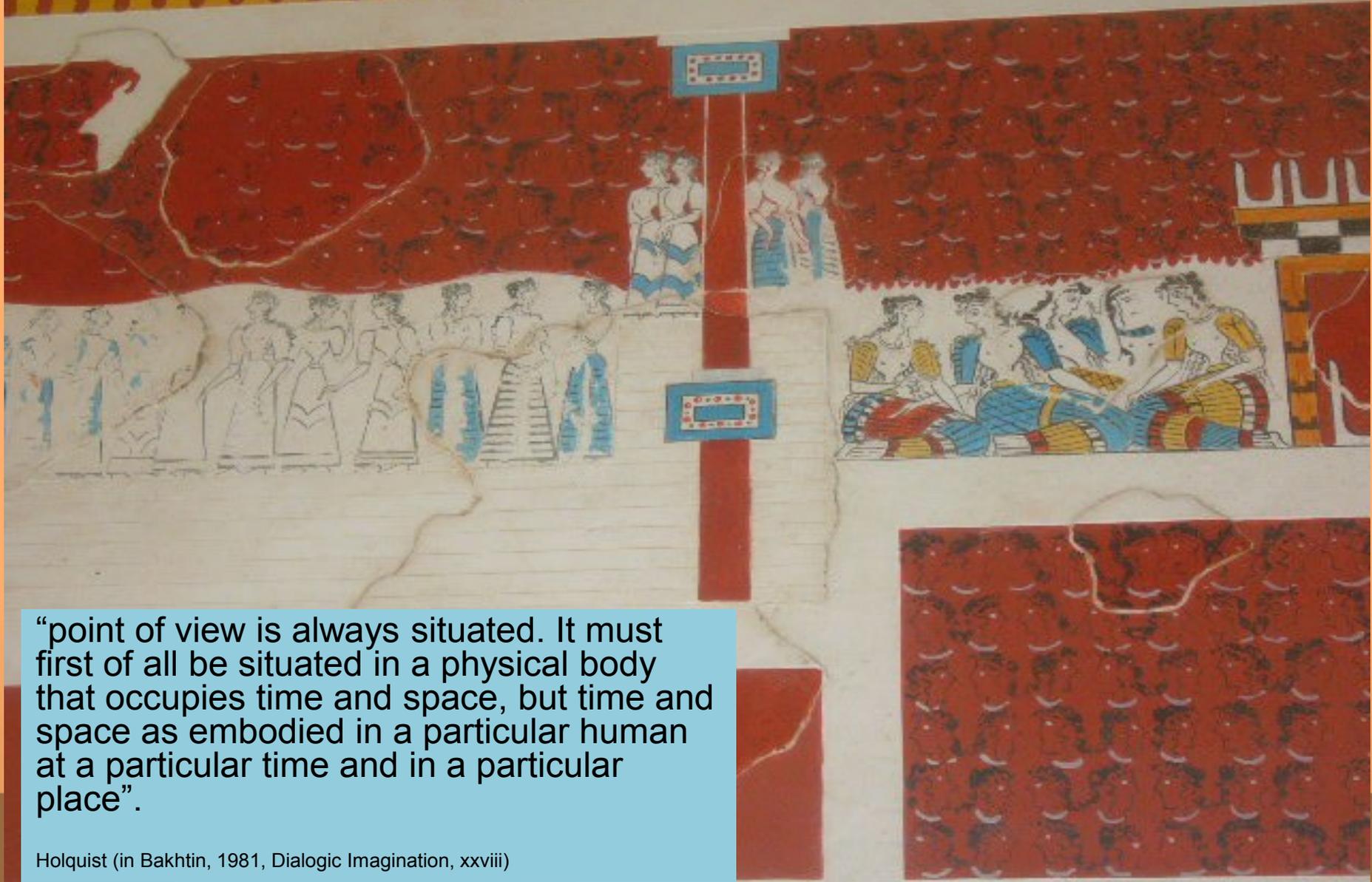
"point of view is always situated. It must first of all be situated in a physical body that occupies time and space, but time and space as embodied in a particular human at a particular time and in a particular place".

Holquist (in Bakhtin, 1981, Dialogic Imagination, xxviii)

Menippean dialogue

Image from Knossos, Heraklion, Crete. May 2007

Dialogism and polyphonism are passwords to a new cultural paradigm – which, with difficulty and through all the sluggishness, monologism and torments of communication, is cutting itself a path

(Gurevich, in Emerson, 1997, p. 149)

Dialogism is ….a method for interrogating and understanding humans in an ever-changing world. The dialogic method operates at every level of the research activity, from the way we frame a question to methods we deploy and the style in which we communicate our observations

(**Bandlamudi, 1999,** p. 61)

Dialogism:

- Beyond words (utterance)
- Beyond intersubjectivity (heros and authors)
- Beyond learning (aesthetic acts)
- Beyond finalisation (consummation)

Beyond the exclusive gaze of the teacher

"all practices, discourses, and relations are inherently dialogic because the meaning making process is dialogic. Life is ontologically dialogic…The ontologic approach to dialogue calls for practices, and especially education, to make dialogicity its guiding principle"

(Matusov, 2009, p. 5)

Heteroglossia

"Bakhtin's way of referring, in any utterance of any kind, to the peculiar interaction between the two fundamentals of all communication"

(Holquist, 1981, xix-xxx)

Influences on Bakhtin's view of language

- Semiotics

    - de Sausurre's study of signs

    - Buhler's organon model and sematology

    - Cassirer's emphasis on symbol

    - Voloshinov's merging of langue and parole

"Detached from the feeling of the author's connecting and form-giving activity, metaphor dies, that is, ceases to be poetic metaphor or becomes a myth" (AA, p. 313)

What can be seen *and* how it is interpreted by participants (answerability) = Utterance

"....these notions could be studied from birth onwards, starting with the babies cries, vegetative sounds, and gestures, most often regarded by the caregiver as a contribution to the dialogical exchange" (Junefelt, 2007, p. 11)

Genre

- A speech plan or speech will which determines the entire utterance, its length and boundaries

(Bakhtin, 1986, p.77)

- The notion of a genre emerging from social activity switches the focus from a more static tableau-like notion of setting (for example a classroom) to the various different social activities, involving different kinds of speech genres, which may be going on within it

(Mabin, 2006, pp. 18–19)

Form: A bridge to the unknown. "A transitory gift"

(Renfrew, 2006, p. 261)

+

Content: Function of the act. Perceived purpose.

=

Genre: A language plan or will (selected from the repertoire the individual has available to them, in order to convey meaning)

Seen only through interpretive eyes (visual surplus)

| Form | ➕ | Content | ──── Shared meaning | Genre |

White, 2009

White, J E. A Bakhtinian homecoming: operationalizing dialogism in the context of an early childhood centre in Wellington, New Zealand. *Journal of Early Childhood Research.* v7, no3, Sage, UK, 2009. p.299-323.

Bakhtin's philosophy of laughter

- Rebalais –Bakhtin's 1946 thesis :Francois Rabelais in the history of realism

- Medieval laughter as "an almost elemental condition" of freedom against renaissance "artistic awareness and purposefulness" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 73)

- Employs the novel in 1930's to celebrate "linguistic and stylistic variety as a counter to tight canonical formulas" (Holquist, in Bakhtin, 1984, p. xvii)

- Influenced by Lunacharsky's "The social role of laughter"

It was here that "laugher made its unofficial but almost legal nest under the shelter of almost every feast" (p. 82)

Features of carnivalesque

Ridicule; Suspension of hierarchy; Ambiguity; Ambivalence; Contradiction; Extremes of abuse, grotesque and laughter; Emphasis on the body; Decrowning of authority

To allow for regeneration and growth that exemplifies the "awakened man"

Elements of the earth that "swallow up (the grave, the womb) and at the same time an element of birth a renascence (the maternal breasts)…" (Bakhtin, 1968, p. 21)

White, E.J. (in press). Are you 'avin a laff: Carnivalesque provocations for ECE, *Special Issue Educational Philosophy and Theory: Early childhood philosophy and pedagogy.*

"Can Bakhtin's scholarship, in itself, offer something distinctive and valuable to education, or is it merely useful in supporting already established positions?"

(Matusov, 2007, p. 232)
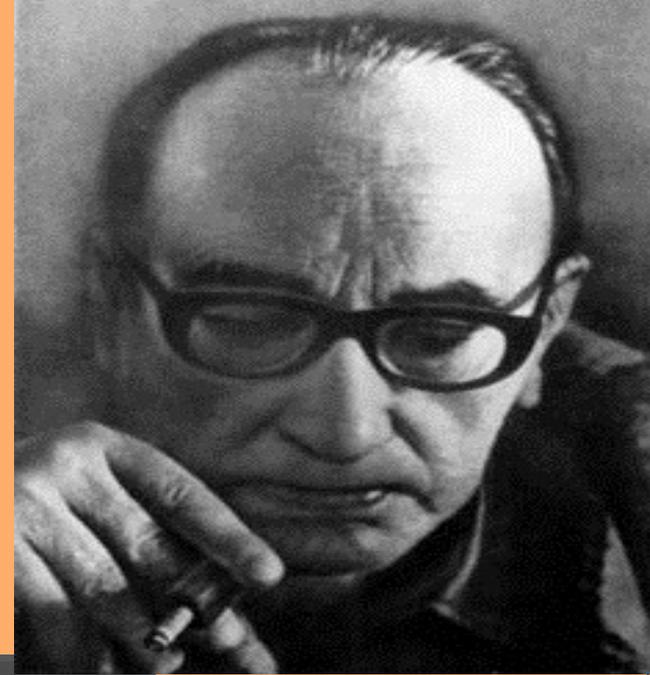
[Bakhtin] reminded us that besides object of analysis, there is subject of analysis that the researcher directly or indirectly addresses in his/her research (Bakhtin, 1986). The unit of analysis has to reflect not only the objectivity of the analysis but also its dialogic subjectivity. The defined unity – the Absolute Spirit in Hegel (1967) or the holistic unit of analysis in sociocultural research – does not exist, and arguably, it is not needed....What does methodology without reductionism and holism look like?

(Matusov, 2007b, p. 326)

A dialogic approach to investigation

- Looks for interpretive point-of-view – especially areas where an electric current ignites meaning
- Looks for form and content = genre
- Looks beyond the verbal in isolation
- Looks for personality, not outcome
- Recognises the hero <u>and</u> the author (i.e. subject-subject versus subject-object)
- Does not aim for synthesis
- Looks aesthetically, artistically at the social act

"we climb from the headier reaches of conceptuality up into the boldest metaphoricity, then up again into a space where even these distinctions cease to hold and allegory gives way to…anagogy" (Pechey, 1998, p. 67)

What is going on today parallels the radical change of the very sense of education when the Middle Ages gave way to the New Time from the trivium and quadrivium of the Classicial Middle Ages to the ideal of the "educated person" having acquired "the last word" in "science and technology"... Now, as well, formation of reasoning and comprehension is changing (terribly slowly for now, but out of necessity) from the "educated person" to the "person of culture", who conjugates in his or her thinking and activity different cultures, forms of activity, values, semantic spectra that are not reducible to one another. **The very content of education must be transformed**

Bibler, V.S., 2009, The foundations of the school of the dialogue of cultures program, Journal of Russian and

White, E J. Response to the school of the dialogue of cultures as a dialogic pedagogy. *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology.* v49, no2, M. E. Sharpe Inc., 2011. p.79-84.
White, E J. Dialogic-dialect: Epistemological alignment or ontologic provocation in education?. *Education Philosophy & Theory (in press)*

PROCESS

1. Teacher learns with students
2. Teacher suspends certainty
3. Student agency underpins all classroom activity
4. Content is always problematic, it is ideologically situated
5. To know means to address *and* reply
6. Student and teacher consciousnesses are of equal importance
7. Curriculum is defined by the kinds of questions that are asked by student and teacher of each other
8. Culture is reconceptualised and thus viewed as transformative

- Over-reaching hegemonic intent through language
- The teacher as Dostoevskian novelist
- Maintaining fluid identities – othering otherness
- Opportunity spaces
- Aesthetic appreciation
- Co-narrative meaning making
- Authorial teaching vs Internally persuasive discourse
- Student-teacher/student-student genres
- Carnivalesque in the classroom
- Chronotope
- Use of metaphor
- Play
- Third-ness

White, E J, Peters, M A. Bakhtinian Pedagogy: Opportunities and Challenges for Research, Policy and Practice in Education Across the Globe. Peter Lang Publishing Inc., New York, 2011. p.1-

| Utterance	Outside-in genre	Inside-out genre	Play genre	Free-form genre	Intimacy genre
Forms identified in coding	Word Resource	Resource Point Word Sound Teacher Initiated Other	Resource Sound Other	Whole body movements Sound Hit Stroke Fist Bite Laugh	Point Sound Word Facial gesture Upturned palms
Content identified	Mimick Demonstrate Independence Routine	Request Please Name Demonstrate Invite Routine	Mimick Name Offer Routine	Resist Trick Mimick Other Unsure of purpose	Name Request Invite Unsure of purpose
Parent-researcher communication style	Explain Finalise	Surprise Inquiry	Explain Surprise	Non-commit Block Acquiesce Embellish	Non-commit
Teacher-researcher communication style	Inquiry Surprise Finalise	Professionalise Embellish Uncertainty	Uncertainty Non-commit Block	Surprise Problematise	Block Acquiesce
Field of vision shared between teacher and	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

Knowing

- Toddler is 'known'
- Objectifying
- Certainty
- Professionalise
- Explain
- Finalise

Not knowing

- Toddler provokes wonder
- Subjectifying
- Surprise
- Problematise
- Uncertainty
- Inquire

White, E J. 'Seeing' the toddler: Voices or voiceless?. *Educational Research with our Youngest: Voices of Infants and Toddlers.* Springer, 2011. p.65-85.

"Our real practice is like dust under the carpet – every now and then it escapes but quickly gets swept away if it doesn't make us look good".
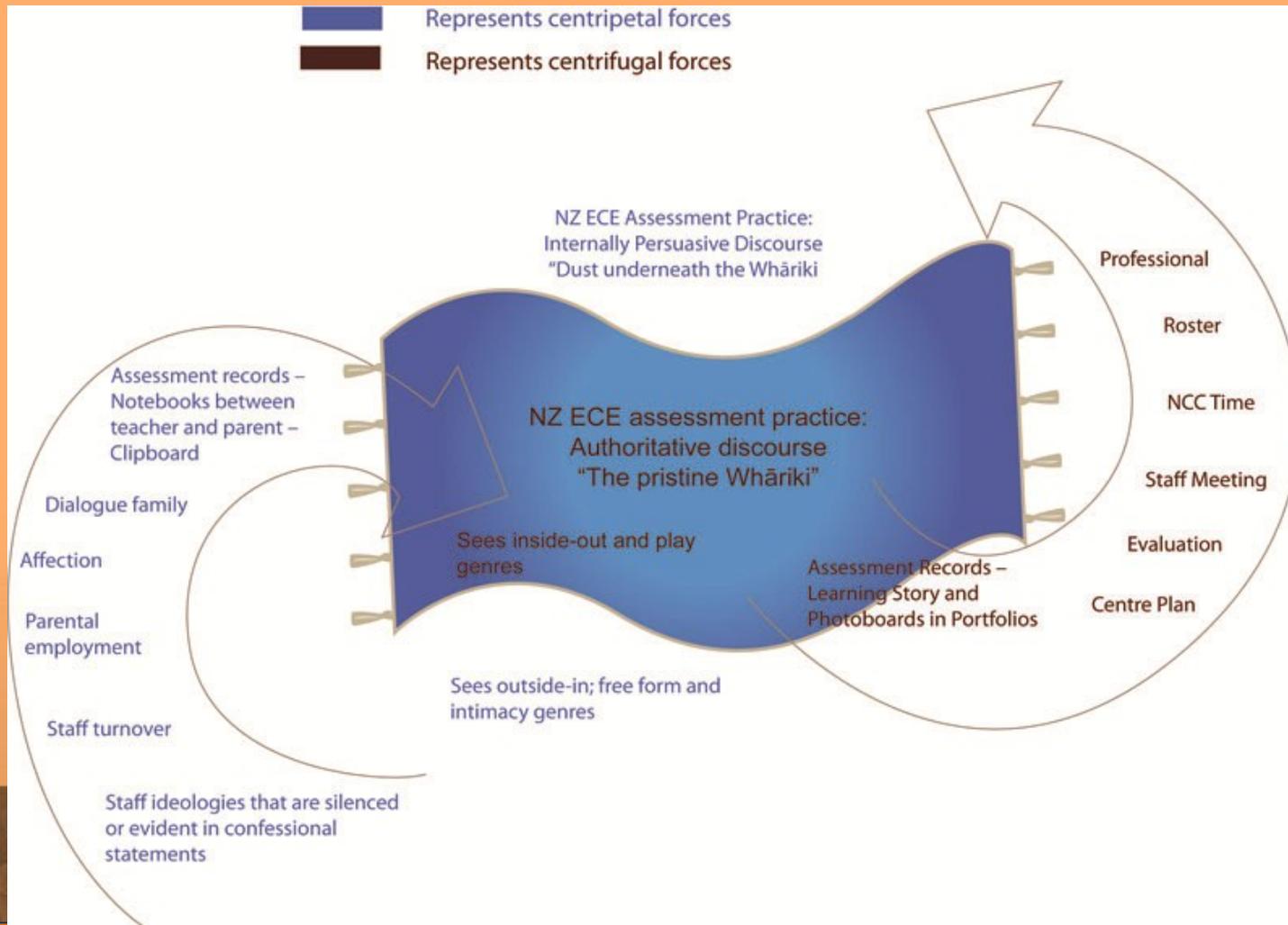
White, E J. Dust under the whāriki: Embracing the messiness of curriculum. *Early Childhood Folio.* v15, NZCER Press, 2011. p.2-6

White, E J. "Now you see me, now you don't": Dialogic loopholes in authorship activity with the very young. *International Society for Cultural and Activity Research (ISCAR) Congress Rome.* Rome; 5-10 September 2011. p.1-9.

Researcher Cam

White, E J. Polyphonic Portrayals: A Dostoevskian dream or a researcher's reality?. *Proceedings of the Second International Interdisciplinary Conference on Perspectives and Limits of Dialogism in Mikhail Bakhtin.* Stockholm University, Stockholm University, Sweden; 3-5 June 2009 2010. p.87-96.

Perhaps it requires watching, living with, and reflecting over time. Teachers need support for this kind of work, but rarely do they find it....What has to occur for things to change is not simply an intellectual shift, so that teachers have more information. This is not just the learning of new pedagogies....Rather, change also has to entail a *moral shift*, a willingness to open oneself up to the possibility of *seeing* those who differ from us. This is very hard work, but *work that lies at the heart of teaching.*"

(Hicks, 2002, p. 152)

"Bakhtin's writing on carnival is productive not only for reimagining learning but also for helping us to understand the demands and dangers of democracy"

(Lensmire, T. 2011, Too serious: Learning, schools and Bakhtin's carnival, in E.J. White & M. Peters, Bakhtinian pedagogy: Opportunities and challenges for research, policy and practice in education across the globe, Peter Lang: New York, p. 126)

How can the teacher ontologically engage the student in this learning when the student is already engaged in a zillion other, competing activities?   AND

How can the teacher engage the student in important learning experiences (responsive authorship) while preserving their freedom to opt out of these experiences and design, initiate, and choose different ones (self-generated authorship)?

(Matusov, 2011, Authorial teaching and learning, in E.J. White & M. Peters, Bakhtinian pedagogy: Opportunities and challenges for research, policy and practice in education across the globe, Peter Lang: New York, p. 41)