

The Conflicting Voices in Tony Harrison's Poetry

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Abstract: Tony Harrison is one of the representatives of the contemporary public poets whose poetry seems to be a language arena in which different narrative voices from different social milieus are imposed upon each other; whose different utterances ideologically orientated collide with each other at every nuance of the semantic level, and whose poetry features as double-voiced discourse. Due to this conspicuous feature, this thesis focuses its attention on the opposite voices in Harrison's poetry, namely the voices of "Them" and "[uz]", of the silent and the eloquent, and of his own forked tongue in order to work out the ideological meanings embedded in each discourse, to trace his split self in the conflicts between his education and his origin.

Key Words: Tony Harrison's poetry, conflicting voices, dialogic discourses, split self

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Introduction

In talking about the major concerns of the contemporary British poetry, Neil Roberts has noticed that “class has continued to be a ground of contention in contemporary English poetry, and the most significant protagonist has been Tony Harrison.¹ Indeed, Harrison is one of the representatives of public poets and “a tough-minded class warrior”,² fighting against discourse hegemony and oppression through his verbal weapons. His poems seem to be a language arena in which different voices speaking from different social milieus are imposed upon each other; in which different utterances ideologically orientated collide with each other at every nuance of the semantic level. Hence his poems are dialogic with several pairs of conflicting voices, which can be regarded as skaz defined by Bakhtin, the double-voiced discourse. Due to these conspicuous features, this thesis focuses its attention on his different voices, namely, the voices of “Them” and “[uz]”, the voices of the silent and the eloquent, and the voices of a forked tongue of his own in order to work out the ideological implications hidden in each discourse, and to trace his split self in the conflicts between his education and his origin.

Them and [uz]

A close reading finds that Harrison’s poems are embedded with skaz, one kind of “double-voiced utterance” in which two distinct voices - the author’s speech and another’s speech - are oriented toward one another within the same level of conceptual authority³. This double-voiced utterance has first been brought to the fore in his “School of Eloquence”, in which a working-class boy retraces his school days at the Grammar School in Leeds, recalling his own accent being strictly corrected and ruthlessly mocked by his teacher. He cannot pronounce the word “**us**” in RP, but clutching to his mother tongue as [uz]. Therefore, in the poem “Them and [uz]” arises two conflicting voices, the authoritative “Them” and the dominated but resisting “[uz]”. “Their” authoritative voice sounds anxious, responsible and scornful for the teacher shouldered the responsibilities to cultivate the boy into civilized eloquent elite, and to remove his “barbarian” accent. Thus in the poem, we can hear the criticizing voice of the teacher first:

4 words only of mi ’art aches and... ‘Mine’s broken,
you barbarian, T.W!’ He was nicely spoken.
‘Can’t have our glorious heritage done to death!’

I played the drunken Porter in Macbeth.

‘Poetry’s the speech of kings. You’re one of those
Shakespeare gives comic bits to: prose!
All poetry ...you see
’s been dubbed by [As] into RP

...
Your speech is in the hands of the Receivers.’

‘We say [As] not [uz], T.W.!’ That shut my trap.

¹ Neil Roberts. *Poetry and Class: Tony Harrison, Peter Reading, Ken Smith, Sean O’Brien* in Neil Corcoran (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth Century English Poetry*. Cambridge: CUP. 215-229, (2007).

² Luke Spencer. *The Poetry of Tony Harrison*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester/Wheatsheaf. 95, (1994).

³ See <http://www.answers.com/topic/skaz>, 2009.

I doffed my flat a's (as in 'flat cap')
 My mouth all stuffed with glottals, great
 Lumps to hawk up and spit out ...E-nun-ci-ate! (122)

The teacher coaches the boy the Received Pronunciation, the prestige standard accent matching poetry----“the speech of kings”, received by the “glorious heritage” of literary and cultural traditions. However, the working-class boy is unable to pronounce even the simplest sound like [ʌs] properly, and consequently he is rejected by “us”, the teacher on behalf, but allotted with a role of “a drunken man” who might be inarticulate in Macbeth. This poor boy suffers not only from the glottal pains but from the emotional offensiveness so far as the teacher contemptuously defines him as a “barbarian”, telling him off for having “our glorious heritage to death”. What is worse, the teacher seems to disdain to call out his full name but “T.W.” which seems to reduce him to a sign. Hence, the teacher’s voice gestures his specific verbal manners of seeing and portraying the poor working class boy, potent with the stabilized ideological value judgments----to underestimate this lower class boy and his provincial dialect. And in this Skaz, the voice of the teacher is manipulating and dominating whereas the voice of the school boy is inarticulate and manipulated. The RP is enacted whilst the dialect is forced to be changed and corrected; the teacher is the speaking subject whereas the school boy is listening and “nicely” spoken of, accordingly he is the speaking object. Thereby, the boy’s narration has explored the class distinction and language oppression through the refraction of the teacher’s discourse. In this sense, the discourse in the above extraction has evident “double-voicedness”.

However, where there is suppression, there is resistance. In the second part of this poem, the inarticulate boy comes to voice in his own accent, fighting for his own dialect as well as for his identity since “each social group---- each class, profession, generation, religion, region ----has its own dialect. Each dialect reflects and embodies a set of values and a sense of shared experience”.⁴ In this vein, the boy retorts his teacher as the follows:

So right, yer buggers, then! We’ll occupy
 your lousy leasehold Poetry.

I chewed up Litterer chewer and spat the bones
 Into the lap of dozing Daniel Jones,
 Dropped the initials I’d been harried as
 and used my *name* and own *voice*: [uz] [uz][uz],
 ended sentences with by, with, from
 and spoke the language that I spoke at home.
 RIP RP, RIP T.W.
 I’m Tony Harrison no longer you!

You can tell the Receivers where to go
 (and no aspirate it) once you know
 Wordsworth’s matter/water are full rhymes,
 [uz]can be loving as well as funny. (123)

⁴Mikhail Bakhtin. in Ian Gregson. Contemporary Poetry and Postmodernism: Dialogue and Estrangement. London: Macmillan Press. 5, (1996).

The harassed school boy resorts to his own mother tongue, the vulgar and barbarian words “yer buggers”, to fight back against his bullying teacher, not meant the personal attacks but the public, directing to the bourgeoisies and *their* value judgments. The boy comes to be a speaking subject, cheering for his own mother tongue with the three-time repetitions of “[uz]”, which he shares with his own group, and which in his view, is both “loving and funny”; furthermore, he belittles poetry as “lousy leasehold” thing, and his capitalized “RIP RP” sound like a big hammer thudding, smashing the Received Pronunciation. In the long run, his “RIP T.W.” shows his resolution to rename and redefine himself, dropping the humiliating initials in order that he could use his full name to publish his poems rustic as those of Wordsworth’s with Cumbrian accent.

The struggling voices for identity attune the same notes in another poem of “Heritage”.

How you became a poet’s a mystery!
Wherever did you get your talent from?
I say: I had two uncles, Joe and Harry ----
One was a stammerer, the other dumb. (111)

Here, we can hear two voices, one is questioning whilst the other is answering. They are socially distinct: the interrogative voice is loaded precisely with the point of view of bourgeoisies, questioning the identity of this poet. Its tone is full of suspicion and contempt. Its implication is “a man of such a breed like you can never be a poet”. “I had two uncles.../ one was stammer, the other dumb”, the answer seems to be digressive and irrelevant to the question; yet reading between the lines, we can see that they are the most eloquent answer to it. Metaphorically, the poet declares that his poetic talent is drawn from his inarticulate parents, whose silence and speechlessness have offered him the inner power to be a poet. As the poet later illustrated,

... I had an inarticulate background, which gave me a deep hunger for all modes of articulation; I learned many languages, obsessively, and also threw myself into becoming a poet, which is for me a supreme and ceremonious mode of articulation.⁵

Indeed it is for the inarticulate that he has brought himself to be a poet, speaking in the form of poetry for his reticent parents and stammered uncles, and moreover for his own class. To him, Stammer and dumb of “[uz]” are emblems of inferiority to “them” ----the articulate and eloquent ---- who control says in society and who oppress the inarticulate ones in the snobbish hierarchic society. Hence, poetry for the narrator is the vital way to expression, “a supreme and ceremonious mode of articulation”.⁶ So facing directly the ill looks of “them”, answering to their scornful questions, the narrator proudly claims and desperately vindicates his identity as a poet.

In the above discourse, dialogical relations between “Them” and “[uz]” are seen to permeate and intensify in each word and each part of the utterance. The two clashing voices perceived as the representatives of the addressers’ semantic and social positions collide within the utterance ideologically, anticipate, argue, and fight tit for tat for their own social status and language prestige respectively.

⁵ See John Haffenden. Interview with Tony Harrison in Neil Astley (ed.) Tony Harrison. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books. 227-246, (1991).

⁶ Neil Astley (ed.) Tony Harrison. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books. 229, (1991).

The Inarticulate and the Eloquent

Harrison's poems do not only possess the embattling voices between "them" and "[uz]" but also those between the inarticulate and the eloquent---between his reticent parents and him, an eloquent poet. As has been mentioned above, the poet lives among "the inarticulate" but turns to be very eloquent through his education. He has sensed the gap between his eloquence and his parents' inarticulation. Accordingly he has a strong desire for articulation. He has demonstrated so when interviewed with John Tusa:

I was aware of a hunger for articulation. And I think in retrospect, it came from not only the fact that I had an uncle who was deaf and dumb and one who stammered but a father who was reticent, shy, unable to express himself. And that the idea of articulation, expression, became for me absolutely vital to existence".⁷

Hence, in his poems, he tries many a way to display the reticence of his parents and his pains for that,

...
I thought how his cold tongue burst into flame
But only literally, which makes me sorry,
Sorry for his sake there's no Heaven to reach.
I get it all from the Earth my daily bread
But he hungered for release from mortal speech
That kept him down, the tongue that weighed like lead.

The baker's man that no one will see rise
And England made to feel like some dull oaf
is smoke, enough to sting one person's eyes
and ash (not unlike flour) for one small loaf. (Marked with D 155)

The above description is a bitter demonstration of his father's reticent feeling: "his sense of being worthless came from the fact that every time he opens his mouth he was brought short and faced in a very raw way with a sense of inadequacy".⁸ His tongue is "cold" and "heavy as lead", and he is eager to "release from his mortal speech" because he feels inadequate in self-expression. He is kept down by his reticence and moreover trapped down at the bottom of the society for in the line we can see that "England made him feel like some dull oaf", marginalized in the society, humble as "ash" much enough only for "a small loaf" "after death. This forcefully indicates that the society should be responsible to his silence since he is not born but made so. Furthermore, in his "Study", the narrator dramatizes his uncle's stammering in the following delineation:

Uncle Joe came here to die. His gaping jaws
Once plugged in to the power of his stammer
Patterned the struck plosive without pause
like a d-d-damascener's hammer. (115)

⁷ Tony Harrison interview with John Tusa in http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio3/johntusainterview/Harrison_transcript.shtml

⁸ Neil Astley (ed.) Tony Harrison. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books. 231,(1991).

Like his father, his uncle struggles hard with his mortal speech, and his tongue is also very clumsy, plugged and struck mechanically. Whenever he tries to speak, the strong sense of futility and failure will be haunting him. He feels despair in self-expression. All these---the reticence of his father and the stammering of his uncle---are the emblems of the collective inarticulate of the grass-roots in the society. In consequence, “articulation is a tongue-tied’s fighting”.⁹ And “the language of the powerful ruling class always kills off the language of the class beneath it”.¹⁰ Under this killing, his parents are accordingly thrown into silence and reticence.

However, the poet knows the vital importance of articulation in life. It means to him a way of existence in the world, and the subjective being in the society. He has quoted Arthur Scargill’s words as an epigraph to his poem “V”, “My father still reads the dictionary every day. He says your life depends on your power to master words.” That is, silencing means to be objectified and manipulated in the world. Reticence means to lose the right to speak for themselves, the appealing power. Therefore, there exists a gap between him and his family, and the contradictory voices arise within his own family life.

...
Shocked into sleeplessness you’re scared of bed.
We never could talk much, and now don’t try.

...
The ‘scholar’ me, you, worn out on poor pay,
Only our silence made us seem a pair.

...
Your life’s all shattered into smithereens.

Back in our silences and sullen looks,
For all the Scotch we drink, what’s still between’s
Not the thirty or so years, but books, books, books.
(Book Ends126)

There is a keen sense of alienation of the narrator from his family. The education he received has cut him off from his parents, and what has left for them is “silence and sullen look” at each other. His family cannot understand him and his books, though he tries to “create new wholes out of that disruption” via poetry.¹¹ His education has driven a wedge into the family, and he comes to be an outsider of the family instead of a loving member. The alienation is marked by the following contrasts: his parents are lost in silence, and whereas his mind “moves upon silence and *Aeneid* VI.”¹²; he turns to be a “scholar” who “slaves at nuances, knows at just one sip/ Chateau Laffite from Chateau Pape”,¹³ eloquent with literary discourses and living in a bourgeoisie style whereas his father “took cold tea for his snap”, “worn out on his poor pay”.¹⁴ In a word, he has been internally colonized by the high-brow culture. As Ken Worpole has explored,

⁹ Tony Harrison. Study in Tony Harrison: Selected Poems. London: Penguin Books. 112, (1984).

¹⁰ See John Haffenden. Interview with Tony Harrison in Neil Astley (ed.) Tony Harrison. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books. 234, (1991).

¹¹ Ibid 246.

¹² Tony Harrison. Tony Harrison: Selected Poems. London: Penguin Books. 115, (1984).

¹³ Tony Harrison. Social Mobility in Tony Harrison: Selected Poems. London: Penguin Books. 107, (1984).

¹⁴ Ibid.

the scholarship system “swept through hundreds of thousands of homes each year like an icy wind, and in many places destroyed the cementing ties of families and class relationships, literally dividing families and friends against each other, sometimes forever.”¹⁵

The sense of permanent division is marked to a greater extent in the following poem:

Though my mother was already two years dead
 dad kept her slippers warming by the gas,
 put hot water bottles her side of the bed
 and still went to renew her transport pass.

You couldn't just drop in. You had to phone.
 He'd put you off an hour to give him time
 to clear away her things and look alone
 as though his still raw love were such a crime.

I believe life ends with death,, and that is all.
 You haven't both gone shopping; just the same,
 In my new black leather phone book there's your name
 And the disconnected number I still call. (Long Distance Call II)

In the above extract, the family estrangement and disconnection have been dramatized: the father in the family keeps the daily practice for the mother, and renews her transport pass as if she were still alive, and the intimate tie and love are strengthened though she has long passed away. However, the only son in the family, now a poet, cannot simply drop in. “You have to phone”, this word has distanced and cut the son off from the family door. And that he simply “cannot drop in” sounds more like prohibit, turning down the boy from going home, and consequently the son has been dislocated, and doubting about his identity as the only son in the family. The dead is present every day, whereas the living will be disconnected person to person. The distance seems to be geographical and physical, however, the real distance standing between the father and the son is the emotional distance, the alienation enacted by “books”. “In my new phone book I write down your name /and the disconnected number I still call”. Though the narrator calls the number, the line is always disconnected because his parents died. He is unable to be identified with his parents when they were alive, and he is still unable to connect with them since they are dead.

Therefore, Harrison's dramatization of his working class silence and the bourgeoisie eloquence is embedded with ideological notions. It tells us that the working class has on the one hand been bereft of their speaking power, and on the other hand their offsprings, enjoyed with the scholarship, have been colonized with the bourgeoisie moral judgment and value system against their original class. And the most coercive aftermath of it is the permanent alienation of the working class boy from his family.

A Forked Tongue of a Split Self

¹⁵ Ken Worpole. ‘Wanna you Scruff’: Class and Language, Tony Harrison, Tom Leonard, Don Paterson in Sara Broom (ed.) Contemporary British and Irish Poetry: An Introduction. New York: Palgrave. 10-35, (2006).

Harrison said that he had same tension between himself with an identity as a poet and the same self with an identity that acknowledges its origins.¹⁶ This internal tension and conflict have been presented and contextualized in many of his poems, especially in his V. In this long poem, we can hear two voices in a “dialogically agitated and tension-filled”¹⁷ verbal environment with polarized value judgments:

What is it that these crude words are revealing?
 What is it that this aggro act implies?
 Giving the dead their xenophobic feeling
 Or just a cri-de-coeur because man dies?

*So what's a cri-de-coeur, cunt ? Can't you speak
 the language that yer mam spoke. Think of'er
 Can yer only get tongue round fucking Greek?
 Go and fuck yerself with cri-de-coeur!*

‘She didn’t talk like you do for a start ! ’
 I shouted, turning where I thought the voice had been.
She didn’t understand yer fucking ‘art’!
She thought yer fucking poetry obscene!
 (V 241)

The above excerpt is about the speaker’s meditation in his family’s cemetery on the class struggles. In this dramatic monologue, we can hear the two voices in two registers: one is the register of standard language whilst the other is the register of crude dialect. The lines of “What is it that these crude words are revealing? / What is it that this aggro act implies? / giving the dead their xenophobic feeling/ Or just a cri-de-coeur because man dies?” are grammatical accurate, archaic with the word “xenophobic” and elegant with the borrowed French word of “cri-de-coeur”. In particular, the word “xenophobic” of the Greek origin is also sodden with its ideological meanings. As defined by the OED, xenophobic can mean a fear of or aversion to, not only persons from other countries, but other cultures, subcultures and subsets of belief systems; in short, anyone who meets any list of criteria about their origin, religion, personal beliefs, habits, language, orientations, or any other criteria.(OED 1997) The choice of the diction as such manifests that the speaker is not only very much sensitive to the clashes between different cultures, religions, beliefs and languages, and also knows well its ideological roots for those clashes. Thus, the speaker is an eloquent scholar, well educated with language proficiencies and the literary traditions. He has in a way assimilated to the high-brow culture and has occupied its literary form to speak for his class, for himself and to the world.

In sharp contrast, the voice answering his meditation is from a barbarian skinhead, speaking in desecrating words. “*So what's a cri-de-coeur, cunt? Can't you speak/ the language that yer mam spoke?*” His dirty word “cunt” is an abrupt “aggro” to the French word “cri-de-coeur”, violates furiously the fineness of the elite language. His demand that the former speak in his own native

¹⁶ See John Haffenden. Interview with Tony Harrison in Neil Astley (ed.) Tony Harrison. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books. 245, (1991).

¹⁷Neil Roberts. Narrative and Voice in Postwar Poetry. London: Longman. 2, (1999).

tongue, no Greek no Latin distinctly betrays he is “xenophobic” to the standard and elegant language. What is more, his exclamation “*She didn’t understand yer fucking ‘art’ / She thought yer fucking poetry obscene!*” declares his contempt attitude and resistance to the artistic and literary traditions, which, as we all know, are centripetal with orthodoxy that unify and centralize the verbal-ideological world.¹⁸ The break-in of the vernacular dialect and the blasphemed diction intends to smash the orthodoxy of the mainstream literature and art, and the grass-rooted verbal carnival duly suspends the reverence for and privilege of them, subverting “the hierarchical worldview and brings together the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant”.¹⁹

*This lot worked at one job all life through
Byron, ‘Tanner’, ‘lieth,ere interred’
They’ll chisel fucking poet when they do you
and that, yer cunt, ’s a crude four-letter word.*

‘Listen, cunt!’ I said, ‘before you start your jeering
The reason why I want this in a book
’s to give ungrateful cunts like you a hearing!’
A book, yer stupid cunt, ’s not worth a fuck!

‘The only reason why I write this poem at all’
On jobs like you who do the dirt on death
’s to give some higher meaning to your scrawl
Don’t fucking bother, cunt! Don’t waste your breath.
(V 242)

The collided voices resound even louder in the above excerpt in which the poet cultivated with the notion of divine inspiration holds the belief that a poet must shoulder the mission of scattering the enlightenments over the mankind “to give the higher meaning to the scrawl”, and to “give them a hearing”. And he firmly believes that this is a sublime mission assigned to him by the divine. However, this notion has been subverted and suspended too by that rustic skinhead who belittles a poet as nothing but “a crude four-letter word”, and even if Byron is anything but a “tanner”, and in a way the holy identity of a poet is dethroned, reduced to a profane sign. Furthermore, the lofty mission of “giving higher meaning of life” is ridiculed and jeered at as a deed of stupidity, and “a book is not worth a fuck”. Once again the carnivalistic blasphemies bring the lofty down to earth. And once again the distinction between the genius poet and the “scrawl”---the illiterate--- is blurred by this carnivalistic profanation. The two different value judgments of literary education functions are polarized at the different registers of discourse, at the nuances of all semantic levels. In addition, it is acknowledged that this poem is a parody of Thomas Gray’s “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard”, yet among the balanced, solemn traditional iambic pentameters are inserted with the skinhead’s capitalized monosyllabic four-letter words such as CUNT, SHIT, PISS, FUCK, and each like a “swung cast-iron Enoch of Leeds stress”, “clangs a forged music on the frames of art”, and smashes “the loom of owned words apart”.²⁰ Therefore, the occupation and subversion of

¹⁸ Neil Roberts. *Narrative and Voice in Postwar Poetry*. London: Longman. 157, (1999).

¹⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin. *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. Caryl Emerson, ed. and trans. Minneapolis: Minneapolis University Press. 123, (1984).

²⁰ Tony Harrison. *On Not Being Milton in Tony Harrison: Selected Poems*. London: Penguin Books. 112, (1984).

literary traditions are again ambivalently presented in the musical form. Superficially, the opposite voices are from two individuals, in effect they come from the forked tongue of a tormented split self as we can see in the text when the poet asks the skinhead to write down his name, and to the former's surprise, "the name is mine",²¹ and the skin-head is obviously his alter ego. The poet thus contextualizes and dramatizes his inner conflicts, his ambivalent attitudes towards his education and literature. To this, Harrison confesses himself,

Originally I was drawn to metrical verse because I wanted to 'occupy' literature, as I said in 'Them and [uz]'. Now that I've occupied it in the sense that I could do it, I learned it as skillfully as I could in order that people would pay attention ...²²

I don't feel happy in the world of literature, and nor do I feel happy—with my education and my identity as a poet---- in my old working class background: I'm in a way alienated from both, and I have to do justice to that alienation in the poem.²³

So the speaker is both subject and object, and his poetic discourse is the dialogic interaction of himself, which manifests his dilemma between two cultures, two dialects and two systems of value judgment. His tongue is forked due to these conflicts. He has occupied literature, can wield his pen as a weapon to speak for his parents but unable to go back to his class; due to his working-class origin he is unable to be accepted by the elite culture even if he is a well-educated poet. He has experienced the double alienations, tormented by the anxiety of identity recognition.

Conclusion

Terry Eagleton uncovered the ideological significance of Harrison's poetry in relation to Bakhtinian dialogic theory in the later 1980s. He claimed that

Harrison is a natural Bakhtinian, even if he has never read a word of him. No modern English poets has shown more finely how the sign is a terrain of struggle where opposite accents intersect, how in a class-divided society language is cultural warfare and every nuance a political valuation.²⁴

This comment is a concise delineation of Harrison and his poetry. With strong awareness of class distinction and cultural difference, oppressed by the ruling discourse, disillusioned with his inarticulate parents, suffered from the alienations connected with language and education as well as his origin, Harrison knows well the vital importance of articulation and wants to make it known to the world. He tends to contextualize the combats through different voices: the language and cultural combats between the bourgeoisies and the working-class through the voices of "them" and "[uz]", the education combats between him and his family through the voices of the silent and the eloquent; the inner combats through the forked tongue of his split-self. In these double-voiced discourses, the dialogic interactions, the authentic sphere where language lives, are dramatically presented and all the dialogic relationships are permeated throughout all the discourses.²⁵ These double-voiced discourses are ideologically embedded, different social milieus and positions, different value judgments and political viewpoints are collided and embattled at very shade of meaning and in very

²¹ *Ibid* V 244.

²² Harrison qtd. in Neil Roberts. *Poetry and Class: Tony Harrison, Peter Reading, Ken Smith, Sean O'Brien in Neil Corcoran* (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth Century English Poetry*. Cambridge: CUP. 218, (2007) .

²³ *Ibid* 234.

²⁴ Terry Eagleton. *Antagonism :V in Neil Astley* (ed.) *Tony Harrison*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books. 348-350, (1991).

²⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Caryl Emerson, ed. and trans. Minneapolis: Minneapolis University Press. 183, (1984).

syntactic structure. As D. Bolinger has noticed, language is innocent, but it loses its innocence and becomes a loaded weapon as soon as it is used in communication, that is, in social discourse.²⁶ With this weapon, Tony Harrison keeps his poetry to the public orientation and attempts to set up a poetic discourse for his silent and inarticulate class, and all these make his poetry full of social and realistic significance. This may be a key formulation of his widely acknowledgement and acceptance as one of the most important public poets today in the contemporary English poetry circles.

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²⁶ D. Bolinger in Peter Verdonk. (ed.) *Twentieth-Century Poetry: From Text to Context*. Ed. London: Rutledge. 21-31, (1993).