

## *Ulysses* and Heteroglossia: a Bakhtinian Reading of the “Nausicaa” Episode.

M. Teresa Caneda Cabrera  
Universidade de Vigo

### ABSTRACT

This article is an attempt to approach James Joyce's *Ulysses* from a Bakhtinian perspective, not only to reinforce the opening thesis (*Ulysses* is the novel par excellence in the light of Bakhtin's theory of the genre) but also to discover the implications of Joyce's use of the so-called “heteroglossia”.

*Ulysses* contains an elaborated dialogue of languages which do not exclude each other but intersect in many different ways. This study approaches the “Nausicaa” episode as a paradigmatic microcosm in which heteroglossia is organized and incorporated according to the same procedures which articulate the whole novel. The analysis of all the voices which participate in the narrative reveals the various mechanisms and meaningful implications of the dialogical interaction within the text.

According to Bakhtin's theory of the novel as a dialogic genre, which he describes as: “multiform in style and variform in speech and voice” (261), the reader of any novel becomes an investigator confronted with several heterogeneous unities, often located on different linguistic levels, and subject to different stylistic controls. The language of a novel is therefore the “system of its languages” (263), by means of which different themes are orchestrated.

This heteroglossic principle, which explains the distinctive links and interrelationships between utterances and words, is precisely the fundamental feature of

the stylistics of a novel such as James Joyce's *Ulysses*. In Joyce's work the novelistic whole is constantly breaking down into different stylistic unities which bring about the appearance of a diversity of individual voices.

*Ulysses* becomes then, in Bakhtin's conception, the novel "par excellence" since its main concern consists precisely in orchestrating a diversity of themes and depicting a variety of ideas by means of a stylistic diversity. This stylistic diversity is achieved through the inclusion of a variety of literary and social discourses and different individual voices artistically organized. In this sense each episode stands as a paradigm of that particular stylistic unity among the many which contribute to the formation of the totality of *Ulysses*.

The uniqueness of the Joycean work lies precisely in that capacity to create a language which is a system of languages. In Bakhtin's perspective, *Ulysses* contains what constitutes the distinguishing feature of the novel as a genre: "Diversity of voices and heteroglossia enter the novel and organize themselves within it into a structured artistic system" (300).

The author of *Ulysses* is the prose writer who distances himself from the language of his own work but at the same time is constantly present, choosing, deciding, selecting, inserting, emphasizing, deliberating, and intruding the language of others. The work becomes then an instance of what Bakhtin denominates a "stratification of languages" (299). Different points of view are presented and diversity of speech and language enter the novel. Joyce does not speak in a given language but through different languages that he "ventriloquates". His intentions are refracted at different angles and the novelistic whole breaks down constantly into what Bakhtin calls heterogeneous stylistic unities:

- (1) Direct authorial literary-artistic narration (in all its diverse variants);
- (2) Stylization of the various forms of oral everyday narration (skaz);
- (3) Stylization of the various forms of semiliterary (written) everyday narration (the letter, the diary etc.);
- (4) Various forms of literary but extra-artistic authorial speech (moral, philosophical or scientific statements, oratory, ethnographic descriptions, memoranda and so forth);
- (5) The stylistically individualized speech of characters. (262)

In *Ulysses* all these types of "compositional stylistic unities" (262) are distributed through the novel conforming to the style of every chapter. One can find episodes such as "Telemachus", which offer a predominantly direct authorial literary-artistic narration: "Stately, plump Buck Mulligan came from the stairhead, bearing a bowl of lather on which a mirror and a razor lay crossed" (3). Direct authorial literary-artistic narration often mingles with the stylistically individualized speech of characters in chapters such as "The Lotus Eaters" and "Hades": "His hand went into his pocket and a forefinger felt its way under the flap of the envelope, ripping it open in jerks. *Women will pay a lot of heed, I don't think*" (59, my italics); "Mr. Bloom glanced from his angry moustache to Mr. Power's mild face and Martin Cunningham's eyes and beard, gravely shaking. Noisy selfwilled man. Full of his son. He is right. If little Rudy had lived" (73); stylization of the various forms of semiliterary (written) everyday narration conforms to the episode of

“Aeolus” with its presentation of newspaper headlines, “The Lestrygonians”, with its inclusion of journalistic style which frequently interrupts the narrative discourse: “Wanted smart lady typist to aid gentleman in literary work” (131); and also “Circe”, written imitating dramatic style, as well as “Calypso” in which both a letter and a poem are inserted. Literary extra-artistic authorial speech is used in the “Ithaca” episode in which the techniques of formal, logical scholastic deduction and scientific analysis are exploited. Finally, the stylistically individualized speech of characters dominates chapters such as “Proteus” or “Penelope” in which, mainly by means of stream of consciousness, the reader encounters the speech of both Stephen and Molly.

*Ulysses* contains therefore an elaborated dialogue of languages which do not exclude each other but intersect in many different ways. The book stands as a conceptualization of the world in words with its specific views as they co-exist in the consciousness of real people. In the narrative discourse words “become flesh”, live a real life and struggle, evolve, echo, mingle and intrude upon each other. They are drawn in by Joyce for the orchestration of different themes and the expression of different intentions.

Heteroglossia becomes then the subject matter of the Joycean work. Its organization is extremely heterogenous and diverse, and a Bakhtinian analysis of *Ulysses* would take us to an expansive reading. The intention of this study is precisely to determine the mechanisms and implications of the dialogical interactions within the text of *Ulysses*. In this sense we will limit our study of the heteroglot languages introduced to an analysis of what Bakhtin calls, within the frame of compositional forms, “the most basic ones”: “parodic stylization”, “language used by characters”, and “incorporation of genres” (301).

In the universe of *Ulysses* the “Nausicaa” episode stands as a paradigmatic microcosm in which heteroglossia is organized and incorporated according to the same procedures which articulate the entire novel. The analysis of this chapter involves not only unravelling the voices which contribute to the particular narrative dialogue, but also understanding how the same dialogue is established through the whole book.

Parodic language as well as the language of different characters and genres intermingle in the episode with such a complexity and intensity that often the reader finds herself/himself wondering to which particular narrative voice certain parts of the discourse belong. The parodic tone is almost constantly maintained, but other voices with different tones interrupt it continually and bring new notes to the polyphony of the episode and the novel in general.

The chapter opens with the voice that recalls the narrative voice of a Victorian novel. The language is deliberately poetic and sentimental: “The summer evening had begun to fold the world in its mysterious embrace” (284). This becomes the “common language” of the first half of the episode. Nevertheless, the relationship of the narrator to this common language is not static. We find a state of movement, “oscillation” (302), to use a Bakhtinian word, by means of which something is exaggerated, emphasized, weakened, or just pointed out.

The so-called oscillation originates from the very beginning with the intrusion of new discourse alien to the previous one, whose meaning it can complete or question. In this sense we can distinguish between the language of a romantic novel and the intrusion of a speech which clearly belongs to a religious discourse: “the quiet church whence there

streamed forth at times upon the stillness the voice of the prayer *to her who in her pure radiance a beacon ever to the storm tossed heart of man, Mary, star of the sea*" (284, my italics).

Shifts from common language to a parodying of generic and other languages, and shifts to the direct authorial word, are reiterated throughout the episode. Sometimes these intrusions are almost imperceptible as in the case we have just pointed out. In this and some other cases the shift from one language to another is gradual. When the female protagonist is characterized in terms of her clothes, a voice from a women's fashion magazine fuses with the narrator's voice: "A neat blouse of electric blue selftinted by dolly dyes . . . with a smart vee opening down to the division and kerchief pocket . . . and a navy threequarter skirt cut to the stride showed off her slim graceful figure to perfection" (287).

On some other occasions the mentioned shift is quite abrupt, this being the case with the publicity slogans which frequently interrupt the narrative discourse in this and other episodes: "Then there was blushing scientifically cured and how to be tall increase your height and you have a beautiful face but your nose?" (286). The same occurs with the introduction of a voice proceeding from the wedding chronicle of a journal within the interior monologue of the protagonist: "Yes, she had known from the very first that her daydream of a marriage has been arranged . . . *the fashionable intelligence Mrs. Gertrude Wylie was wearing a sumptuous confection of grey trimmed with expensive blue fox was not to be*" (288, my italics).

In the same style, one of the most curious dialogues of voices from different domains occurs when the speech from a cook book intrudes on the discourse of the narrator's voice:

Her griddlecakes done to a goldenbrown hue and Queen Ann's Pudding of delightful creaminess had won golden opinions from all because she had a lucky hand also for lighting a fire, dredge in the fine selfraising flour and always stir in the same direction, then cream the milk and sugar and whisk well the white eggs... (289)

Bakhtin denominates this type of intrusion "concealed form" (303). It designates the introduction of the speech of another into the author's discourse without any of the formal markers, and, as the critic explains, "This is not just another's speech in the same language — it is another's utterance in a language that is itself other to the author as well" (303).

Joyce's intention in *Ulysses* is precisely to offer an account of the different alien voices which conform not only to one's speech but also to one's consciousness. Therefore, the presentation of the female protagonist's indirect monologues becomes at times a veritable collage. It incorporates a continuous parodization of the languages of the romantic novelette, women's magazines and columns of practical advice.

The play with heteroglossia is not only obvious but intentional. There is no clue most of the time and the shift in the exposition takes place without any warning, as we have seen. The "clearing of the way" (304) that Bakhtin attributes to certain words which become markers of the intrusion of a different speech within the narrative discourse is not the general tonic in *Ulysses*. On the contrary, Joyce prefers to surprise the reader with a

pastiche of voices whose procedure is at times difficult to determine since one gives way freely to the others.

The play with heteroglossia originates in “Nausicaa” with the appearance of what Bakhtin calls “hybrid construction” (304). According to him, a 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. (304)

In this respect we should point out that the division of voices that takes place within the limits of a single syntactic whole in “Nausicaa” goes a step further and we often confront not only two but three or more different voices.

An example of hybrid construction would be the following sentence in which the narrator’s voice fuses with another voice which introduces a proverbial expression: “The twins were now playing again right merrily for the troubles of childhood are but as fleeting summer showers” (292).

The following quotation from “Nausicaa” illustrates the above mentioned construction (let us call it multi-hybrid) which Bakhtin does not stop to consider in his notion of hybrid. Four different voices integrate (disintegrate) into the same syntactic unity and the reader is asked to disentangle the speech of a baby, that of the narrator, and immediately afterwards the one which belongs to two other characters:

Peep, she cried behind the hood of the pushcar and Edy asked where was Cissy gone and then Cissy popped up her head and cried ah! (292)

The intrusion of different voices and styles in an open and direct way, that is, by merely juxtaposing them, is undoubtedly one of the main novelties of the technique used in *Ulysses*. Nevertheless, the “Nausicaa” episode also contains a characteristic and more traditional device for concealing another’s speech in hybrid constructions. Bakhtin denominates it “pseudo-objective motivation” (305).

Pseudo-objective motivation occurs when the logic motivating one sentence seems to belong to one voice but, using some type of link word and offering the flavour of another’s language, a different voice is introduced. As Bakhtin remarks, such motivation is especially characteristic of comic style and, since the parodic tone is the dominant note of the first half of the “Nausicaa” episode, a variety of examples can be pointed out. Let us examine some.

When describing the female protagonist’s physical appearance, the narrator’s voice seems to adopt the point of view of an artist. The language used recalls the speech of a painter or sculptor but it is suddenly disrupted by the intrusion of a voice which introduces certain terms extracted from a beauty magazine. The shift is anticipated by the conjunction *though*: “Her hands were of finely veined alabaster with tapering fingers ... *though* it was not true that she used to wear kid gloves in bed or take a milk footbath either” (286, my italics).

Likewise, in the following example, both narrative voice and the character's speech (through indirect style) merge, their boundaries being however established by the introduction of the conjunction *but* twice. The first time it announces the character's speech, the second time it announces the return to the narrator's voice:

The twins clamoured again for it and Cissy told her to kick it away and let them fight for it so Gerty drew back her foot *but* she wished their stupid ball hadn't come rolling down to her and she gave a kick *but* she missed and Eddy and Cissy laughed. (292, my italics)

This latter is an example of a typical hybrid construction where subordinate and main clauses are constructed in different semantic systems. Whereas the first part ("Gerty drew back her foot") represents not subjective opinion but an objective fact, the second ("she wished their stupid ball hadn't come rolling down to her") is at the level of expression of a subjective feeling.

Throughout *Ulysses*, and particularly in the first part of the "Nausicaa" episode, the play with the boundaries of speech types, especially the parodic attitude towards different forms of inserted genre discourse (novelette, magazine, proverb, journal, chronicle, religious litany), abounds and brings to the text a comic, almost hilarious, style at times.

In this sense Joyce's attitude reflects Bakhtin's belief about the novelist taunting the deceptive human world "by a parodic destruction of syntactic structure thereby reducing to absurdity some of the logical and expressively accented aspects of words" (309). Not in vain is *Ulysses'* main concern the play with words themselves and the parodic stylization of incorporated languages.

Joyce experiments with the Bakhtinian notion of the "author's freedom from a unitary and singular language" (315). The speech of narration is always another's speech in another's language. The variety of the linguistic medium used provides the author with the opportunity to manifest himself not only through the narrator's speech and language, but also through other different points of view and, therefore, different forms of language.

Parodic style and inserted genres are forms which refract the author's intentions and give a clear account of the intended play with diversity as opposed to uniqueness; the reader receives the story through not one single voice but a multitude.

The language used by the characters also contributes to the incorporation and organization of heteroglossia in *Ulysses*. It influences authorial speech and stands as another way of introducing language stratification and speech diversity in the novel. In Joyce's work the speeches of characters pervade the discourse mainly through direct and indirect monologue.

In "Nausicaa" the Bakhtinian "character zones" (316) —field of action for a character's voice—break constantly and encroach upon many other voices. Joyce presents the reader with continuous transgressions not only in the world of words but also in the world of un verbalized thoughts, the world of consciousness. Speeches that belong to different characters mingle with thoughts within the minds of others: "You had to laugh at her sometimes. For instance when she asked you would you have some more Chinese tea and raspberry ram . . ." (290).

The use of hybrid constructions when recreating the speech so common in *Ulysses* merges with a context belonging to the author on many occasions. As Todorov reminds us in his interpretation of Bakhtin's dialogical principle, the author frequently manipulates the character's discourse: "the author can also use the discourse of the other towards his own ends, in such a way that he imprints on this discourse, that already has and keeps its own orientation, a new semantic orientation" (71).

In "Nausicaa" Gerty's inner speech is usually intruded upon by that of the narrator, who uses Gerty's discourse to give expression to his own purposes. In this sense, the first half of the episode is full of allusions to Gerty's feet. Her limp appears to be suggested often in her own discourse, although very vaguely, since the narrator has decided to reveal it only at the very end: "she knew she need fear no competition and *that was an accident coming down Dalkey Hill and she always tried to conceal it*" (297, my italics).

The same type of intrusion takes place in Gerty's own considerations about the man that she sees in the distance —Bloom—, "a man of inflexible honour to his fingertips" (299). The reader nevertheless recognizes the authorial intentionality in the use of the word "fingertips", since the scene of his masturbation is still recent. Appropriating the word from another context, the author succeeds in presenting an ironic pun suggested through the protagonist's speech but clearly belonging to a context alien to her. This constitutes, in Bakhtin's own words, "double voiced discourse" (324). It expresses, as the quoted example illustrates, authorial intentions but in a refracted way. According to Bakhtin,

It serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author. (324)

This type of hybridization facilitates the mixing of different accents and the blurring of boundaries between speeches. It brings, together with the inserted genres and parody already mentioned, heteroglossia to the text.

In *Ulysses*, the reader encounters the novel as genre in the purest Bakhtinian sense. Joyce does not offer any primary means for verbally appropriating reality but an interaction of many possibilities.

Milan Kundera, one of the contemporary authors who has shown a great concern, as a critic and writer, with the transformation of the modern novel, argues in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* that ever since Joyce, "The greatest adventure in modern life is precisely the absence of adventure" (90). In its turn, modern narrative aims only at the linguistic expression of the multiple possibilities of the mind.

Odysseus fought at Troy, made his way home on a ship he himself piloted, had a mistress on every island— no, such is not the life we live. Homer's *Odyssey* now takes place within man. Man has internalized it. The islands, the sea, the sirens seducing us, and Ithaca calling us home— they have all been reduced to voices within us. (90)

Joyce gathers all those voices and exercises his freedom as author, a freedom connected with the relativity of literary and language systems. He never defines himself in one language but transfers the language of all those different and multiple voices. In the new Joycean proposal, narration is equated with breakdown, disintegration and fragmentation of boundaries. There is not a single truth but multiple truths, and reading becomes the activity of acquiring knowledge by listening to a chronicle of diversity which becomes heteroglossia in the narrative discourse.

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