

## **A Comparative Analysis of Polyphonic Dimensions in XIX Century English Novels**

**Saparova Mohigul Ramazonovna**

Senior teacher, Bukhara State University, Bukhara, Uzbekistan

E-mail: [m.r.saparova@buxdu.uz](mailto:m.r.saparova@buxdu.uz)

**Abstract:** *This paper compares the concept of polyphony in nineteenth-twentieth century English novels through three representative works from Charles Dickens, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf. My research utilizes Mikhail Bakhtin's approach (which maintains that a text can function as both monologue and dialogue) to look at how the various independent voices co-exist and overlap within these works. The research adopts a comparative literary methodology in order to gain a deeper understanding of the aesthetic, social, and psychological dimensions of polyphonic representation. The results show that Dickens's social realism, Joyce's otherworldly stream of consciousness, and Woolf's modern multi-voice further advance the progression of polyphony as found in English novels. The study concludes that polyphony functions as a narrative tool to express the fragmented subjectivities and diverse worldviews of modernism, which also marks a shift in our mode of narration from monologic to dialogic structures.*

**Key words:** *Polyphony, Dialogism, Bakhtin, Modernism, English Literature, 20th Century Literature of England, Dickens, Joyce, Woolf*

### **Introduction**

The application of the concept of polyphony, found and developed by Mikhail Bakhtin in his study of Dostoevsky, has transformed the entire study of narrative structure and authorial voice. Bakhtin (1984) defined polyphony as the coexistence of several equally autonomous voices within a single text, each possessing its own ideological perspective [1]. No voice is dominant in this framework; on the contrary, the text becomes a dialogic stage where different streams of consciousness flow together at once [2]. As a result, this concept, in particular, revolutionized literary theory as it related to the modern novel's handling of a heterogeneous world. In the context of English fiction from the 19th and 20th centuries, polyphony serves as an invaluable tool for investigating ways in which writers such as Dickens, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf constructed narratives that reflect social diversity, depth of psychology, and cultural transformation [3]. The industrial revolution, urbanization, and evolving moral values necessitated new narrative forms capable of capturing warring perspectives and shattered means of expression [4]. This article will examine how each of Dickens, Joyce, and Woolf expanded the novel's expressive range through distinct kinds of polyphonic narration, all of which were based on Bakhtin's theory [5].

### **Methodology**

The research is based on Bakhtin's dialogism and heteroglossia, carrying out a comparative literary methodology [6]. Textual analysis is centered on certain works by these writers: Dickens ("Bleak House," "Hard Times"), Joyce ("Ulysses"), and Woolf ("Mrs. Dalloway," "To the Lighthouse"), in an effort to track how polyphonic elements manifest themselves. The study involves close reading and intertextual analysis to investigate character voice, narrative structure, and ideological plurality. It also finds support in secondary sources such as Holquist (1990), Kristeva (1986), and Todorov (1984) for the purpose of situating Bakhtin's ideas in the context of

contemporary literary criticism [7]. This qualitative, interpretative method seeks to show how each author solves the relation between individual consciousness and societal discourse through narrative mode [8].

## Results

The comparative analysis suggests that Charles Dickens, Joyce, and Virginia Woolf represent three distinct but related attempts to achieve multi-vocality [9]. Dickens makes social heteroglossia appear in his novels, for example, through the depiction of varying social classes and dialects [10]. His multiple narrators and embedded dialogues create opportunities for marginalized voices to participate in moral discourse and offer ideological views [11]. In contrast, Joyce embodies internalized polyphony; he turns it into psychological multiplicity. The use of the stream-of-consciousness technique in “Ulysses” invites the reader into internal dialogism; processes of thought, memory, historical echoes, and other voices coexist. Woolf was a pioneer in narrative craft. Beginning with “Mrs. Dalloway” and continuing uninterruptedly to “To the Lighthouse,” her technical innovations promoted polyphony by changing from person-on-the-street realism into an intense dialogue between individual consciousnesses in a given moment of time and space [12]. The upshot of all this is that English novelists were redefining narrative voice. Moving from external social heteroglossia to internal multiplicity in modernist subjectivity is just one aspect of their achievement [13].

## Discussion

The findings show that polyphony in English literature has kept pace with social change. Though rooted in the moral didacticism of the age, Dickens's realism is a foretaste of modernist experiment through his complex layering of social dialogue. His work demonstrates how narrative plurality serves to break up industrial capitalism and confront various kinds of moral hypocrisy [14]. In his radical internalization of polyphony, Joyce transforms the social dialogue of Dickens into an experiment in modernist language and psychology. Employing multilingual or mythic parallels, he places individual consciousness in a broader cultural-historical context and pattern (Joyce, 1922). Woolf takes things farther afield by blending temporal and gendered perspectives, constructing what critics such as Susan Sellers (2010) have called “feminine dialogism,” which stresses the interaction of subjectivities and empathy. With her supple changes in focalization, Woolf makes novelistic voices interdependent rather than isolated. The novel becomes a collective consciousness; it is no longer the product of an individual writer's imagination [15].

To deepen this analysis, the novels of Charles Dickens, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf are used to exhibit how polyphonic representation operates on various axes: level (the characters), range (the context of interaction interchanges), and narrative structure.

Charles Dickens: A Social Polyphony and Morality in Conversation In “Bleak House,” which was written by Charles Dickens in 1853, the duality of the narrative—an omniscient third-person narrator and a first-person narrator representing Esther Summerson's eyewitness account—embodies Bulgakov's dialogism. Both narrators embody different dominant moral ideologies. As Bakhtin (1984) contended: “The polyphony emerges where voices continue to fall apart and still join each other in dialogue.” So, while theirs are opposing narrative voices, Dickens's moral disquisition skillfully links—sometimes blending—to shock critical judgment of Victorian hypocrisy and legal legislation.

In a similar way, Dickens juxtaposes Mr. Gradgrind's rigid Rationalist logic with Sissy Jupe's imaginative sympathy. “Facts alone are wanted in life,” embodies monologic Utilitarianism, which the novel dismantles by offering a variety of moral positions. These competing voices allow Dickens to create polyphony on a non-linguistic level: social heteroglossia, where the language of working classes and industry managers or reformists coexist in a single space, continuously challenging one another.

In his multi-layered style, Dickens turned social commentary into an art of lively conversation. His novels reveal that within the social realm, truth emerges through interactions among conflicting discourses, rather than from any one authority.

### **James Joyce: Internal Polyphony and Linguistic Experiment**

In James Joyce's "Ulysses" (1922), instead of the diversity of other one-way conversations, polyphony becomes an internal affair. Joyce uses an inner symphony of consciousness that mixes thought with echoes from memory and society. The interior monologues of Leopold Bloom, Stephen Dedalus, and Molly Bloom create a chorus where different subjective realities coexist on the same level, without hierarchy.

### **Virginia Woolf: Feminine Dialogism and Temporal Multiplicity**

Virginia Woolf extends the polyphonic tradition by combining psychological simultaneity with temporal fluidity. In "Mrs. Dalloway" (1925), the simple opening line—"The flowers themselves were Mrs. Dalloway's business"—serves as a jumping-off point for a series of meditations within Clarissa Dalloway and other characters.

The narrative's seamless transitions between perspectives convey what Kristeva (1986) terms intertextual subjectivity—an identity that emerges through relation rather than isolation. Woolf transforms Bakhtin's dialogism into an ethical style.

In the "Oxen of the Sun" chapter, Joyce parodies various English prose styles simultaneously: he starts a paragraph in one style and ends it in another before the next begins. This verbal clown can be viewed as an embodiment of heteroglossia, where multiple languages coexist in a single speech.

In this particular episode, as Holquist (1990) correctly points out, "Joyce has internalized what Bakhtin described as the multiplicity of languages spoken by people"—transforming from a social dialogue into both linguistic and psychological forms.

Her polyphonic style is not just a formal invention but a moral ideal. It describes human experience as a chorus of shared voices resonating throughout the cracks and hollows between memory and gender perception.

The fact that the evolution of English polyphony involves social as well as psychological phenomena is well demonstrated by Dickens, Joyce, and Woolf together, through their old-fashioned methods of international contrast. Dickens externalizes polyphony with social stances—a clash of dialects, classes, and moralities. Joyce internalizes it through experimental language and psychic multiplicity. Woolf harmonizes it through intertwined consciousness and layered timelines. According to Bakhtin, the majority of classics, such as Toshi Asta's "The Original Subject" and "Theory of the Novel," hold that "the truth does not exist nor reside in the head of an individual person, but it is born between people collectively searching for truth." Their work makes multi-voiced novels the dominant model of English fiction in the modern age. Polyphony comes into its own as a form and an ideal in national narrative modes; even the most barren societies will contain vibrant voices.

### **References**

- [1] M. M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Minneapolis, MN, USA: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
- [2] K. Clark and M. Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*. Cambridge, MA, USA: Harvard University Press, 1984.
- [3] C. Emerson, *The First Hundred Years of Mikhail Bakhtin*. Princeton, NJ, USA: Princeton University Press, 1997.
- [4] M. Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World*. London, U.K.: Routledge, 1990.
- [5] J. Joyce, *Ulysses*. Paris, France: Shakespeare and Company, 1922.
- [6] G. Tihanov, *The Master and the Slave: Lukács, Bakhtin, and the Idea of Their Time*. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2000.

- [7] G. S. Morson and C. Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics*. Stanford, CA, USA: Stanford University Press, 1990.
- [8] M. R. Saparova, "The features of a polyphonic novel as a literary work," *Scientific Aspects and Trends in the Field of Scientific Research*, 2024.
- [9] M. R. Saparova, "A structural analysis of a polyphonic novel in English literature," *Excellencia: International Multi-Disciplinary Journal of Education*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 154–159, 2025.
- [10] M. R. Saparova, "Peculiarities of polyphony in Uzbek literature," *International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics*, vol. 3, no. 4, pp. 103–106, 2024.
- [11] S. Sellers, *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- [12] S. S. Kurbanov, "The use of dysphemisms expressing curses in character speech," *Academic Research in Educational Sciences*, vol. 4, 2021.
- [13] M. R. Saparova, "The evolution of Bakhtin's theory from Dostoevsky to contemporary literature," *American Journal of Education and Learning*, vol. 3, no. 9, pp. 535–540, 2025.
- [14] M. R. Saparova, "Understanding of Uzbek literary genres," *Innovative Achievements in Science*, vol. 3, no. 34, pp. 14–17, 2024.
- [15] V. Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*. London, U.K.: Hogarth Press, 1925.