Chapter 1

Introduction: Bakhtin and Polyphony

The works of Bakhtin that are considered landmarks in literary criticism are Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics, The Dialogic Imagination and Rabelais and His World. The Dialogic Imagination contains an elaboration of the idea of “polyphony” originally propounded in Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics. In a sense, these two books together can be treated as providing a lucid summary of Bakhtin’s poetics. Though Rabelais and His World does not make any mention of the theoretical terms Bakhtin uses in Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics and The Dialogic Imagination, this book in several respects is an illustration of Bakhtin’s dialogic theory. In fact, as R.B. Kershner says, “dialogism” (which is alternatively called “polyphony,” and at times “heteroglossia”) and “carnivalization” are the key concepts of Bakhtin and the three books together provide ample illustrations of them (15).

Polyphony is basically “a new theory of authorial point of view” propounded by Bakhtin (Clark and Holquist 3). Polyphony literally means “multi-voicedness” (PDP 279). Polyphony arises in fiction when the special
position of the author allows great freedom of interaction to the characters. The characters in a polyphonic novel are allowed maximum freedom so that they could argue with each other and even with their author. That is, in polyphonic novels different centres of consciousness are allowed to interact on the plane of the novel.

According to David Lodge, a polyphonic novel is a “novel in which a variety of conflicting ideological positions are given a voice and set in play both between and within individual speaking subjects, without being placed and judged by an authoritative authorial voice” (After Bakhtin 86). The multivoiced nature of fiction allows different ideological perspectives to enter the novel. Bakhtin’s theory is sometimes called “dialogics.” Dialogics or dialogism, according to Bakhtin, means the process by which meaning is evolved out of interactions among the author, the work and the reader/listener. These elements are in turn influenced by the context in which they are placed, i.e. by the social and political forces influencing them. This is what Bakhtin has got to say on how meaning is generated in Dostoevsky’s dialogic novel:

It is constructed not as the whole of a single consciousness, absorbing other consciousnesses as objects into itself, but as a whole formed by the interaction of several consciousnesses, none of which entirely becomes an object for the other; this
interaction provides no support for the viewer who would objectify an entire event according to some ordinary monologic category (thematically, lyrically or cognitively)—and this consequently makes the viewer also a participant.

(PDP 18)

Bakhtin makes a crucial connection between a “polyphonic” novel and a “dialogic” novel. He writes: “The polyphonic novel is dialogic through and through” (PDP 40). Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist also see the two terms interchangeable and write: “The phenomenon that Bakhtin calls ‘polyphony’ is simply another name for dialogism” (242). David Lodge also sees synonymity between the two terms. He writes: “In Bakhtin’s theory, ‘polyphonic’ is virtually synonymous with ‘dialogic’” (After Bakhtin 86). Lynne Pearce makes a subtle distinction between the two terms even though she also suggests the interrelatedness of the two terms. She writes: “‘polyphony’ is associated with the macrocosmic structure of the text (literally, its ‘many voices’) and ‘dialogue’ to reciprocating mechanisms within the smaller units of exchange, down to the individual word” (21). In this dissertation we consider “polyphony” and “dialogue” to be interchangeable terms and that a polyphonic text should necessarily dialogic and vice versa.
Bakhtin explains novelistic polyphony in a rather roundabout way. He at first shows the importance of Dostoevsky as a polyphonic writer. He sees polyphony to be a special characteristic of the novels of Dostoevsky. He writes: “We consider Dostoevsky one of the greatest innovators in the realm of artistic form. He created, in our opinion, a completely new type of artistic thinking, which we have provisionally called polyphonic” (PDP 3). Dostoevsky according to him originated “a fundamentally new novelistic genre” and succeeded in “constructing a polyphonic world and destroying the established forms of the fundamentally monologic (homophonic) European novel” (PDP 8). He also clarifies that Dostoevsky is not an “isolated instance in the history of the novel, nor does it mean that polyphonic novel which he created was without predecessors” (ibid 44). Thus Bakhtin asserts the position that all novels are polyphonic and that Dostoevsky’s polyphonic novel had predecessors in the folkloric genres of antiquity. What he does in eulogizing Dostoevsky to be a polyphonic writer is only to show the readers “what is unique to him,” that is, the “Dostoevsky in Dostoevsky” and thus to give Dostoevsky’s novels a unique place in the milieu of novelistic polyphony (ibid). This is the position asserted in this dissertation. In analysing the traits of polyphony in Ulysses, a representative novel of its age that has exerted tremendous influence on later novelists, we are pointing to the twin facts that Joyce is a successor of the polyphonic writers as well as that fiction as a genre belongs to the
domain of polyphonic narration. Bakhtin often associates the name of Dostoevsky with polyphonic writing and Dostoevsky’s novels have now become a synonym for the polyphonic novel. The “Dostoevskian” novel, therefore, for all practical purposes means the polyphonic novel.

If Bakhtin sees Dostoevsky as the exemplary exponent of polyphony in Russian literature, Sheldon Brivic sees Joyce to be Dostoevsky’s counterpart in English literature. He is asserting Joyce’s unique position as a writer of polyphonic novels when he writes, that no one “before Joyce had expressed such a plural consciousness or taken such a multiphonic point of view” (58). Making specific reference to Ulysses, he asserts that Joyce’s polyphonic stance “frees the work from the authority of a single author” and introduces “multiple levels of discourse” in the novel (ibid 57-58). This aspect of polyphony is seen in the representation of multiple narrators in Ulysses.

As already mentioned, the peculiarity of a polyphonic novel is that the characters are absolutely free from authorial control. The voice of the author is here never dominant and the characters “answer back” with great freedom. The hero occupies a unique position in a polyphonic novel. His position is as important as that of the author. He stands along the side of the author, and as another individual human being he listens to the author, responds to him, agrees or disagrees with him.
He is a thoroughly "self-conscious" being capable of commenting on himself and on his surroundings (PDP 50). By "self-consciousness" Bakhtin means the capacity of a person to comprehend reality about oneself as well as others out of which one forms oneself. It is the self-consciousness of the polyphonic hero that helps him stand apart from other monologic heroes. This polyphonic "anti-hero" struggles against any sort of literary definition by the author or reader. It is with his self-consciousness he is capable of jolting the finalizing definitions of his selfhood by others. Thus the polyphonic novel deconstructs the finalized image of an "embodied" hero in monologic texts. In other words, the reader here meets a fully self-conscious hero who is allowed maximum independence for a full flowering of his self-consciousness instead of the "stable and fixed" hero of the monologic type (PDP 51).

The self-conscious hero takes up the authorial work in a polyphonic novel and gives information regarding him from all sides. As a result what "the author used to do is now done by the hero, who illuminates himself from all possible points of view" (ibid 49). The hero makes comments not only about himself but also about his surrounding world. What is important about the hero in a polyphonic novel is not how the hero appears to the world but how he himself and the surrounding world appear to the hero. This is what Bakhtin writes about the Dostoevskian hero:
The hero interests Dostoevsky as a particular point of view on the world and on oneself, as the position enabling a person to interpret and evaluate his own self and his surrounding reality. What is important to Dostoevsky is not how his hero appears in the world but first and foremost how the world appears to his hero, and how the hero appears to himself. (PDP 47)

The new position of the hero in polyphonic novels requires a totally new method of artistic representation. The author’s task in a polyphonic novel is reduced simply to discover the “sum total of his consciousness and self-consciousness, ultimately the hero’s final word on himself and on his world” (ibid 48). The author does not “describe” the hero in a polyphonic novel i.e. the author does not use his own words to define him. Instead, the author gives a definition of the hero in the words of the hero himself:

The author constructs the hero not out of words foreign to the hero, not out of neutral definition; he constructs not a character, nor a type, nor a temperament, in fact he constructs no objectified image of the hero at all, but rather the hero’s discourse about himself and his world. (Ibid 53)
This is similar to the idea of the “Uncle Charles Principle” which Hugh Kenner has detected in Joyce. This principle comes into operation when the author uses the language and idioms of the hero himself in defining him in the novel. This means that Joyce is a polyphonic author and his heroes are polyphonic heroes.

However leaving the hero maximum independence does not mean that the author is inactive or passive in the polyphonic novel. One sees “no kind of passivity on the part of the author, who only assembles other’s viewpoints, completely rejecting his own viewpoint” (qtd. in Clark and Holquist 244). But the author’s position in a polyphonic novel is a very “highly positive and active” one where the author has his own ideas and viewpoints, which he expresses in his work. Here “the author acts as an organizer and participant in the dialogue without retaining for himself the final word” on the events described (PDP 72). Thus we can see the freedom of the polyphonic hero lying within the limits of author’s artistic design.

The author’s discourse about a character in polyphonic novel is organized “as discourse about someone actually present, someone who hears him (the author) and is capable of answering him” (ibid 63). This is because the polyphonic author “like Goethe’s Prometheus creates not voiceless slaves (as does Zeus) but free people capable of standing alongside their creator, capable of not agreeing with him and even of
rebelling against him" (PDP 6). Thus the characters in a polyphonic novel, once they are created, skip out of the authorial control and they argue and fight with their author, and the reader observes a multiplicity of "equally valid" voices representing different attitudes and values among the author and the characters, among different characters and sometimes even within the same speaking or thinking subject.

Bakhtin sees the polyphonic author as creating and not inventing his characters. According to Lynne Pearce, the "author of the polyphonic novel cannot be said to 'invent' his or her characters because they are defined by the 'logic' of their self-consciousness, but he or she does 'create' the work of art which allows those characters their being" (47). Bakhtin describes the new relationship between the author and the character in terms of dialogue:

Thus the new artistic position of the author with regard to the hero in Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel is a *fully realized and thoroughly consistent dialogic* position, one that affirms the independence, internal freedom, unfinalizability and indeterminacy of the hero. For the author, the "hero" is not "he" and not "I" but a fully valid "thou," that is, another and autonomous "I" ("thou art"). The hero is the subject of a deeply serious, *real* dialogic mode of address, not the subject of a rhetorically *performed* or *conventionally* literary one. And
this dialogue—the "great dialogue" of the novel as a whole—takes place not in the past, but right now, that is, in the real present of the creative process. (PDP 63)

Thus one can see that in a polyphonic novel intense dialogic activity is required from the part of the character, author as well as the reader. For this each of them should "broaden, deepen and rearrange...[his] consciousness [...] in order to accommodate the autonomous consciousnesses of others" without renouncing oneself or one's consciousness (ibid 68).

The chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's (polyphonic) novels is a "plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices" (ibid 6). Therefore a linear development of the plot or character resulting in exposition and closure cannot explain the "pluralistic" world of the polyphonic novel. The plot in polyphonic novels does not finalize the characters or events:

Plot in Dostoevsky [polyphonic novel] is absolutely devoid of any sort of finalizing foundations. Its goal is to place a person in various situations that expose and provoke him, to bring people together and make them collide and conflict—in such a
way, however, that they do not remain within this area of plot-related contact but exceed its bounds. (PDP 276-77)

Bakhtin attacked the conventional idea of the work of art as a finished or closed thing. According to him, a work of art will live only if it is engaged in a dialogue. Dialogue is possible only in works that are not closed, i.e. in works that are still open, i.e. in polyphonic works in which their authors do not retain the final word about their characters. The dialogue in such a work is facilitated by the highly independent characters who are capable of interacting with each other as well as with their author. The lack of dialogue in monologic texts is because their authors do not let any such freedom for their characters. Such authors, according to Bakhtin, hold a “surplus” of vision, over their characters, which prompt them to give rigid and monologic views in their novels (ibid 70). By “surplus” of vision Bakhtin means a state where the author occupies a superior position in a literary work and is capable of seeing everything beforehand and manipulating everything. In a novel where the author has a surplus of vision over his characters, he predicts everything about his characters and even thinks for them. The author of a polyphonic novel does not hold such a surplus of vision over his characters. Hence dialogue is possible in a polyphonic novel. Joyce’s conception about the position of the author in his novels is quite similar to Bakhtin’s conception about the non-interfering
position of the author in polyphonic novels. The Joycean aesthetics describing the impersonality of the author in artistic works goes like this:

The artist, like the God of creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails. (Joyce, Portrait 397)

Both these writers see the author as remaining more or less passive and hidden in comparison to their fully independent and self-conscious heroes.

Bakhtin likens the move from the monologic to the dialogic authorship to a shift from the heliocentric to the Copernican universe (PDP 49). If in the heliocentric universe, the sun was at the centre of all things, in the Copernican world, the sun no more occupies the central position. A similar shift takes place in the change from monologic writing to the polyphonic/dialogic writing. In monologic novels the author occupies a central position but in polyphonic/dialogic novels, the author is no more at the centre and he occupies a place only along with others.

Bakhtin sees the characteristic feature of prose that distinguishes it from poetry as its “possibility of employing on the plane of a single work discourses of various types, with all their expressive capacities intact, without reducing them to a common denominator” (ibid 200). This is its
pre-eminently polyphonic nature. Hence the author of prose narratives is confronted with voices of several people—the word of one person confronting the word of another person, which is equally filled with other's voices, "among which he must orient himself and whose speech characteristics he must be able to perceive with a very keen ear" (PDP 201). Hence the importance of studying the various types of discourse in prose literature. Bakhtin alternatively uses the term "word" for discourse. We will continue to use the term "discourse" in its Bakhtinian sense in the rest of this dissertation.

Bakhtin considers the "double-voiced" discourse the "chief hero" among various novelistic discourses (ibid 185). According to him this is a peculiar feature of the novel that arises from the dialogic interaction of language. Dialogic relations are relations like agreement-disagreement and affirmation-negation that might arise between any two utterances. A linguistic analysis of narration can only reveal the logical and semantic relationships in language. This type of analysis is quite sufficient to explain monologic relations, but is grossly inadequate to explain dialogic relations. Pure linguistics alone, in other words cannot define the difference between a monologic and a polyphonic/dialogic discourse. Hence a "metalinguistic" approach is required to study the complexities involved in the orientation of
one’s discourse among other’s discourses, i.e. the dialogic relations within any discourse.

Bakhtin is interested in such speech phenomena as stylization, skaz, parody and dialogue and thinks that these phenomena require special treatment in the study of novels. These phenomena, which according to him are the best expression of dialogicality, belong to the category of double-voiced discourse. What is perhaps important in a polyphonic novel is “the overriding importance of precisely such dialogically oriented discourse, and to the negligible role played by monologically closed off discourse, by words that expect no answer” (PDP 63). It is the double-voiced discourse that determines the polyphonic nature of fiction.

As in Dostoevsky, Joyce is seen using a peculiar verbal style in his novel. Joyce himself speaks of his quest for the correct syntax of the words in his possession. In his reply to Frank Budgen as to whether he was looking for the “mot juste,” Joyce stated: “I have the words already. What I am seeking is the perfect order of words in the sentence. There is an order in every way appropriate. I think I have it” (Budgen 20). No doubt, Joyce is also interested in using Bakhtin’s favourite category of discourse type, viz. the double-voiced discourse as is revealed by the presence of “dialogically oriented discourse” in Ulysses.
Bakhtin classifies novelistic discourse into three main types:

The first type of novelistic discourse is the direct, unmediated and referentially oriented discourse of the author. This is exclusively oriented to the object or topic of reference. In novelistic prose, this discourse is the direct speech of the author or the implied author. Naming and informing come under this category.

The second variety of novelistic discourse is called the "objectified discourse," i.e. speech, which is the object of authorial understanding and treated by the author as someone else's discourse. This is the "discourse of a represented person," i.e. the speech of the character (PDP 199). This speech is also referentially oriented. But it is subordinated to the authorial discourse.

Both the above categories of discourse are single-voiced for they represent a single consciousness and a single intention. Hence they can be called monologic discourse.

The third variety of discourse is called "double-voiced discourse." A discourse in which two semantic intentions or two voices occur simultaneously is called a double-voiced discourse. These two voices do not merge completely as they do in a single voiced discourse. Such a double-voiced discourse can be called dialogic. Bakhtin considers double-
voiced discourse to be the "quintessential expression of dialogicality" (Lynne Pearce 52).

The author of a double-voiced discourse will take an "objectified" discourse and infuse it with his own private intentions and consciousness. He will at the same time retain the original speaker’s intentions. That is, the peculiarity of double-voiced discourse is that “discourse in them has a two fold direction—it is directed both toward the referential object of speech as in any ordinary discourse and also toward another’s discourse, i.e. toward someone else’s speech” (PDP :85). We can hear the point of view of the original speaker as well as the point of view of the second speaker in the double-voiced discourse. Therefore the audience of a double-voiced word is “meant to hear both a version of the original utterance as the embodiment of its speaker’s point of view (or “semantic position”) and the second speaker’s evaluation of that utterance from a different point of view” (Morson and Emerson, Rethinking Bakhtin 65). This double orientation of speech will complicate the ordinary referential orientation of speech.

Bakhtin divides double-voiced discourse is into “passive” and “active” varieties. In the “passive” variety, the other’s speech remains “passive” in the hands of the author and the author makes use of the other’s words for his own special purposes. The passive double-voiced discourse is further subdivided into “unidirectional” and “vari-directional” types. The
unidirectional variety is best represented by “stylization” and “skaz.” The vari-directional variety of the passive double-voiced discourse is represented by “parody.”

In the “active” variety of double-voiced discourse, the author does not directly take into account another’s discourse and use it for his own purposes. But the discourse of the other influences the author’s discourse from outside in some way and as a result the author’s words change accordingly. Here, the other’s discourse is capable of influencing the author’s speech and we find an “active” relationship of the other’s discourse with the author’s discourse. Hence this is called active double-voiced discourse.

Active double-voiced discourse is seen in daily speech when we talk with reservation taking into account all the hostile views of the other’s words. The other’s speech influences the author’s speech profoundly and the author always refers to it. Hidden polemic and hidden dialogue are the main types of discourse that come under this category. Overt polemic, internally polemical discourse and internal dialogues are also some other types of discourse that come under active double-voiced discourse. The peculiarity of all varieties of active double-voiced discourse is that they are all “reflected” words, words with an intense “sideward glance” at other’s discourse (PDP 205). The chapter “Discourse Types in Ulysses” of this
dissertation discusses all the varieties of discourse types envisioned by Bakhtin.

R.B. Kershner sees Bakhtin as referring to three broad varieties of dialogism in a literary text: (1) arising from the interaction between authorial language and the protagonist's language; (2) arising from the interaction between the protagonist's language and the language of other characters in a text; and (3) arising from the interaction between the language of a text or a protagonist taken as a whole and other relevant texts to which implicit or explicit allusion is made. Even though the last variety of dialogism suggests the notion of "intertextuality" Kershner rejects this notion for he thinks that Bakhtin is more interested in spoken language than in written language (18-19). It is true that Joyce was also more interested in the spoken language than in the written language but the notion of intertextuality is not quite irrelevant in the case of Joyce as intertextuality cannot be merely reduced to a literary phenomenon. Julia Kristeva poses the problem of "intertextuality" in the novels of Joyce and other "modern" writers. According to her the "modern" novels of Joyce, Proust and Kafka are marked by their "intertextuality" that distinguish them from their nineteenth-century predecessors. She writes: "A break occurred at the end of the nineteenth century: while dialogue in Rabelais, Swift, and Dostoievski remains at a representative, fictitious level, our century's
polyphonic novel becomes 'unreadable' (Joyce) and interior to language (Proust, Kafka). Beginning with this break—not only literary but also social, political, and philosophical in nature—the problem of intertextuality (intertextual dialogue) appears as such” (71).

Bakhtin introduces another concept called “heteroglossia” in The Dialogic Imagination. This is a slightly improved version of the idea of polyphony. Bakhtin’s elaborate description of heteroglossia runs like this:

The novel can be defined as a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized. The internal stratification of any single national language into social dialects, characteristic group behaviour, professional jargons, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of authorities, of various circles and of passing fashions, languages that serve specific sociopolitical purposes of the day, even of the hour, (each day has its own slogan, its own vocabulary, its own emphases)—this internal stratification present in any language at any given moment of its historical existence is the indispensable prerequisite of the novel as a genre. ( DI 262-63)
What Bakhtin means by this definition of heteroglossia is that the uniqueness of the novelistic genre lies in its heteroglot nature. Heteroglossia arises from the interaction of various discourses in a polyphonic novel. Heteroglossia is produced by means of the “internal differentiation” and “stratification” of different registers in a language. It is in fact an expression of the struggle between the official and nonofficial registers. The means by which heteroglossia enters the novel are the authorial speech, the speeches of narrators and other characters and the inserted speech genres. Pam Morris sees in the shift of terminology from “polyphony” to “heteroglossia” a “shift of emphasis towards social languages rather than individual voices which were more the focus of analysis in the study of Dostoevsky’s prose” (113). Thus if polyphony deals with individual voices, heteroglossia deals with social voices. Hence “polyphony” becomes a vehicle for the arrival of “heteroglossia” in novels.

Any study of Bakhtin’s theory of the novel will be incomplete without a reference to his ideas on folk culture and its manifestations. The study of folk culture is integral to his theory of novel, as he talks of the influence of “carnival” on literature. In Rabelais and His World Bakhtin makes an attempt to study the impact of folk culture on official culture by studying François Rabelais’ novel Gargantua and Pantagruel. He examines how the carnival culture of the folk crept into high culture through the
works of the writers like Rabelais. Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist see
Rabelais and His World as mainly “a study of how the social and the
literary interact” (299).

While considering the formal similarities between Bakhtin and
Joyce, we can see that Ulysses is primarily a text like Bakhtin’s Rabelais
and His World that had to face sharp criticisms and even a ban on the
procuring and reading of it. Ulysses, in other words, is quite Rabelaisian in
spirit. Here too the similarity between Joyce’s novel and Bakhtin’s study
cannot go unnoticed. Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist in their book
Mikhail Bakhtin write that James Joyce’s Ulysses is “a book that might be
described as a celebration of heteroglossia and of the body as well” (317).

The Encyclopaedia Britannica gives the meaning of “carnival” as
“the merrymaking and festivity that takes place in many Roman Catholic
countries in the last days and hours of the pre-Lenten season” (881). Carnival has its origins in the Latin word “carnem levere” which actually
means “to take away or remove meat.” Before the beginning of the austere
and pious days of the Lent the people indulged themselves in festivities of
all sorts. This time is referred to as the carnival. Carnival was celebrated on
the day prior to the commencement of the fasting and prayer days of Lent.
Huge quantities of food, meat and drinks, which were not permitted during
the Lent, were consumed on the days of carnival. Thus food, drink and
merrymaking became an integral part of carnivals. Carnivals also coincided with the feasts of saints. This is the religious origin of carnivals.

Carnival is actually a "syncretic pageantry of the ritualistic sort" (PDP 122). It contains many festivities and is not actually a literary phenomenon. Carnival images had some resemblance to the artistic forms like the "spectacle." Medieval spectacles had a folk culture base. Thus carnival belonged somewhere on the "border line between art and life" (Rabelais 8). Bakhtin defines carnival as

[...] a pageant without footlights and without division into performers and spectators. In carnival everyone is an active participant, everyone communes in the carnival act. Carnival is not contemplated and, strictly speaking, not even performed; its participants live in it, they live by its laws as long as those laws are in effect; that is, they live a carnivalistic life. Because carnivalistic life is a life drawn out of its usual rut, it is to some extent "life turned inside out." "the reverse side of the world" (monde a` l'envers). (PDP 122)

The man of the Middle Ages, it is said, lived two lives; the "official" life, which was subject to law and order and the norms of decency and etiquette, and the "carnival" life which was free from all the constraints of
any form of rules or regulations. Thus carnival represented a life of freedom from the official Middle Ages. These were two cultures opposed to each other. There was no dialogue between these two realms and carnival expressed only a parody of the official culture. The carnival and the non-carnival lives were strictly separated by temporal boundaries: there was a specific period for each of these two lives. Carnival lasted only for this short period of time.

Carnival represents a topsy-turvy world where law and order do not exist. Carnival is thus a celebration of disorder. During carnival time, life is subject to its laws alone. Carnival law is the law of freedom. In carnival all the existing rules and norms are turned turtle. "Misrule" is the rule in carnival. Thus carnival is a life out of ordinary life; a time out of ordinary time. That is, anything and everything is permitted in carnival, as long as the carnival lasts.

Carnival is not restricted in place. It is a communal event in which everyone takes part. In a carnival, there is no division into actors and performers or to the theatre and the stage. In short, everyone participates in carnival. All the events of carnival take place on the carnival square. In the carnival square one sees a free intermingling of all classes and all ages and all languages without any form of barriers. This condition can also be
viewed as the societal manifestation of literary heteroglossia. According to Keith M. Booker the concept of Bakhtin’s carnival has representatives from different social and political strata thrust together in the same physical and social space in such a way that normal hierarchies and class distinctions are rendered ineffective, or at least unstable. This juxtaposition of various voices allows for a polyphonic dialogue that highlights the differences among social groups and generally calls into question the assumptions that would hold certain groups to be ascendant over others. (34)

Both polyphony and heteroglossia enter novels through the process of carnivalization. Julia Kristeva sees polyphonic novel as one “incorporating carnivalesque structure” (71). She sees Bakhtin as studying “the polyphonic novel as an absorption of the carnival and the monological novel as a stifling of this literary structure” (Kristeva 69). Just like dialogue, which is a continuing process and is always opposed to the “authoritarian word” carnival is opposed to the “authoritarian culture.”

Carnival is a festive life of the people organized on the basis of laughter. This is how Bakhtin describes the power of laughter:
Laughter has the remarkable power of making an object come up close, of drawing it into a zone of crude contact where one can finger it familiarly on all sides, turn it upside down, inside out, peer it from above and below, break open its external shell, look into its center, doubt it, take it apart, dismember it, lay it bare and expose it, examine it freely and experiment with it. (DI 23)

Thus, laughter has the capacity to destroy the epic distance, fear and piety regarding an object. A distant object is always an object of reverence and respect. Only that which is brought close can be made comical. Thus the basic concept in carnival is a diminishing of the epic distance. Joyce has strictly followed this concept of the reduction of epic distance in carnival in the writing of Ulysses. The modern Ulysses is a “carnival legend” of Bloom whereas the origin of this novel is from an “epic legend.” The difference between the two is that as in the carnivalistic legends, this novel debases the hero, “bring[s] him down to earth, [...] make[s] him familiar, bring[s] him close, humanize[s] him” (PDP 133). As Bakhtin says, “ambivalent carnival laughter burns away all that is stilted and stiff, but in no way destroys the heroic core of the image” (ibid).

Laughter replaced official seriousness during carnival. The folk culture was a culture of laughter. Laughter was shunned from the official
realm and the literature of the Middle Ages. The folk culture brought in laughter even in the midst of official, ecclesiastical and feudal culture of the Middle Ages. In the case of extreme laughter, a person tends to “fall upside down” from his normal erect posture revealing his opposite side. Similarly everything reveals their other side in carnival through laughter. It is this edifice of laughter that tilts the whole world upside down for carnival. Since laughter is festive and infectious and no one can stand apart from a laughing crowd, everyone becomes a participant in carnival. Thus, carnival laughter is not the laughter of an individual person. It is universal in nature and embraces all its participants.

In the Middle Ages, people gave great importance to carnival festivities and to rituals associated with them. The church allowed the laughter associated with merrymaking during church festivals. “Easter laughter” was permitted by the church. There were open-air amusements involving clowns, fools, dwarfs, monsters and even animals for the feasts and fairs in the church. The fools and clowns taking part in these amusements mimicked the church rituals. The role of fools and clowns was not limited to the church alone. They were also active participants in agricultural feasts like “vendange” (grape harvesting) and other civil and social ceremonies. They mimicked the rituals in these ceremonies. Thus they became the acknowledged representatives of the carnival spirit in
everyday life. The “feast of fools” and the “feast of the ass” were two rituals associated with carnival processions. In the former, a fool or a clown is elected a king in place of the actual ruler. He will preside over the activities of the carnival. Everything is seen in a droll aspect from the point of view of this “foolish” king.

The ritual of the “feast of the ass” arises from the importance given to the ass in the Testament. The ass is usually a lowly animal with no greatness of its own. But it was this contemptuous animal that was selected by the King of Kings for his two important journeys recorded in the Scriptures: the flight of infant Jesus from Herod on the ass and the ceremonial approach of Jesus to Jerusalem on an ass. The ass is thus temporarily elevated to the position of the vehicle for the king.

In the above rituals, one sees a “mock crowning” and a “decrowning”. This in fact is the primary act in carnival. Such mock crownings and decrownings are present everywhere in carnival. Along with this decrowning ceremony comes other carnival gestures like “free and familiar contact” among people as well as among objects and ideas, “carnivalistic mésalliances” in which everything is turned upside down and “profanation” of things that are considered holy. “Eccentricity” is another aspect of carnival. Eccentricity here means “the violation of the usual and the generally accepted, life drawn out of its usual rut” (PDP 126). The
participants in carnival reverse the utility of every item, as for example, as in the putting of the clothes inside out, for in carnival everything is viewed upside down. This is also a special category of carnivalistic mésalliances. Kershner thinks that as “a ‘theatre without footlights’ in which all are participants, the carnival festival undermines the concept of authoritative utterance, and through its characteristic rituals of mockery, crowning and decrowning of fools, billingsgate, nonsense, and the degrading of everything held noble or holy, carnival presents a ‘contradictory and double-faced fullness of life’” (16). The carnival familiarity is seen in Ulysses when Joyce takes it for granted that his readers (perhaps his immediate Irish contemporaries and also the future generation of readers who are expected to know of Ireland and Irish customs) are quite aware of all the places mentioned by him. This is how Budgen writes about this:

Streets are named but never described. Houses and interiors are shown us, but as if we entered them as familiars, not as strangers come to take stock of the occupants and inventory their furniture. Bridges over the Liffey are crossed and recrossed, named and that is all. We go into eating-houses and drinking bars as if the town were our own and these our customary ports of call. Libraries, churches, courthouses, the
municipal government, professional associations function before us without explanations or introductions. (69-70)

Feasts are an important part of every festival. Food is integral to both the church carnival and secular carnival. The official feasts of the Middle Ages did not take the people out of their normal lives, for everyone was expected to attend such feasts in their uniform and a strict hierarchical order was maintained on the tables. During the carnival feasts such ranks were no more considered and everyone came and sat on the same table and perhaps even ate from the same plate. Even mock kings and queens were elected to preside over such feasts. Everyone appeared for these feasts in carnival costumes.

All these aspects of carnival have greatly influenced literature. The influence of carnival on literature can be called “carnivalization of literature” and the literature influenced by the elements of carnival is “carnivalized literature.” Bakhtin finds the roots of carnivalized literature in the serio-comical genres of the ancient times and he thinks that it is from this that the polyphonic novel originated. Very significant among the serio-comical genres that made great impact on the “dialogic” or “polyphonic” novel are the “Socratic dialogues” and the “Menippean Satire.” The deliberate “contemporisation” of myths, legends, things and events, the relying on “experience and free invention” of characters, and the rejection
of the stylistic unity of canonical genres like epic, tragedy, lyric are features common to all serio-comic genres. Bakhtin says:

Characteristic of these genres are a multi-toned narration, the mixing of high and low, serious and comic; they make wide use of inserted genres—letters, found manuscripts, retold dialogues, parodies on the high genres, parodically reinterpreted citations; in some of them we observe a mixing of prosaic and poetic speech, living dialects and jargons (and in the Roman stage, direct bilingualism as well) are introduced, and various authorial masks make their appearance. (PDP 108)

Bakhtin was already talking of polyphony and heteroglossia as characteristic of serio-comical genres. Ulysses was no way away from this literary ancestor in the polyphonic realm in the use of these ingredients in its novelistic structure.

The carnival life reached its pinnacle of glory during the Renaissance and showed a decline after this period. Until the seventeenth century carnival was the direct source of carnivalization. From the middle of the seventeenth century onwards, carnival ceased to be a direct source of carnivalization. Now, the source of carnivalization is carnivalized literature.
Thus carnivalization has now become a literary tradition. In other words, carnival has now lost its genre forming influence. But one can see the direct influence of carnival and also the influence of carnivalized literature like Rabelais’ *Gargantua and Pantagruel* in *Ulysses*.

The recreational literature of the Middle Ages was infused with the carnival spirit and made extensive use of carnival images. Such carnivalized literature included comic verbal compositions in Latin and in the vernacular, which constitutes another important category of folk culture. “Parodia Sacra” (the Sacred Parody) produced in the Middle Ages was a parody on the sacred texts and rituals of the church. Many varieties of parody like the parodical liturgies, parodical Gospel readings, and parodical prayers such as the parodical Lord’s Prayer and the parodical Ave Maria were created under this category. Other examples of recreational literature include the “Cyprian’s supper,” a parody of the scriptures and “Grammatical Virgil Maro,” a parody of Latin grammar as well as the wisdom and science of the Middle Ages. Parody is an integral component of all carnivalized genres whereas the pure genres like the epic and tragedy do not make use of any parody. Both parody and carnival subvert the existing order. According to Margaret Rose “both parody and the carnival could serve to subvert concepts of hierarchy—the one in undermining the
hierarchy of literary styles maintained in poetics, and the other the social hierarchy of class” (169).

In a very friendly and festive carnival atmosphere, where no laws exist and where there is free contact among people, the language used will also be in tune with it. Here, all abusive words lose their meaning and are used freely in a tone of great intimacy. In formal, official communication, such words may be considered indecent and insulting. In the carnival atmosphere, all forms of speech eliminated from the official, ecclesiastical and feudal realm are permitted and used. The use of abusive language also produce laughter in the carnival time. These “Billingsgate genres” constituting curses, oaths and popular blazons are the third category of folk humour. All the speech patterns eliminated from the official intercourse are placed under the broad category called the “language of the marketplace.” The marketplace speech makes use of abusive language, as well as insulting words and expressions. The carnival square is the place where abusive and indecent language could be freely used. Profanities and oaths also break the norms of official speech. Hence they are also excluded from the realm of official language.

These then are the three fundamental categories of folk culture. All these categories of folk humour are closely linked and interwoven. In totality, they represent the humourous and laughing aspect of the world.
The three types of folk humour outlined above represent the ambivalent nature of comic imagery. One can always see both poles of the change of a thing in carnival. Praise is always seen in intimate contact with abuse, birth with death, the face with the rump, stupidity with wisdom and so on. Doubles/twins also form an ambivalent carnival image. The carnival laughter is also ambivalent. Its ambivalent nature makes it gay and triumphant but at the same time mocking and deriding. The mock crowning/decrowning ceremony where fools are elected kings, the “Parodia Sacra” where sacred texts and rituals are parodied, the language of the billingsgate where abuse is considered praise—all show the ambivalent nature of laughter produced during carnival. But all these forms of folk humour had been so far studied away from the folk culture. Hence the peculiarity of comic imagery inherent to the folk culture was not understood.

The folk culture represents the human existence in the literary mode called “grotesque realism.” It is through grotesque realism that social event of carnival gets its literary manifestation. According to Kershner, “Rabelais embodies the spirit of carnival in his works through the use of grotesque realism, which regularly reduces ‘higher’ issues to the ‘material bodily lower stratum,’ and through parody” (16). Food, drink, defecation and sex are four major requisites of the human body. The images of the human
body consisting of the above requirements constitute the material bodily principle, which is one of the most essential aspects of the carnivalesque. The bodily principle, which is part of the heritage of the culture of folk humour that Rabelais and other writers have assimilated into their writing, in reality constitutes the concept of “grotesque realism” and “can be characterized as the incorporation of images depicting the material functions of the human body (eating and drinking, defecation, copulation) into cultural or artistic texts” (Gardiner 47). Clark and Holquist see in the grotesque “the expression in literature of the carnival spirit” (312). The concept of grotesque realism in other words emphasizes the changes that take place in a human body through eating, drinking, defecation and sex.

The grotesque is opposed to anything that is static or permanent. Hence, everything here is in a state of flux and nothing is ever finished. The grotesque body always tries to cross its bounds. This body grows into another body and is never separated from the rest of the world. Hence it always looks for any protrusion that might go out of the body’s limits. The grotesque body outgrows its limits and receives another body through the bowels and the phallus. The gaping mouth is the most important feature of the grotesque body. It is through the mouth that the world to be swallowed enters the body. The final important feature of the grotesque body is the anus. The peculiarity of all these bodily convexities and orifices is that “it
is within them that the confines between bodies and between the body and the world are overcome" (Rabelais 317). Hence the main events in the life of the grotesque body take place in these areas. It is precisely for this reason that these organs and their functions like eating, drinking, defecation and other acts of elimination viz. sweating, blowing of the nose, sneezing as well as copulation, pregnancy and child birth are exaggerated and hyperbolised in grotesque literature. We can see that just as “the carnival enacts the intertextuality of ideologies, official and unofficial, so the grotesque body foregrounds the intertextuality of nature” (Clark and Holquist 304). The grotesque body is not an isolated and individualised body of recent times but it is the collective body of the people as a whole. Since the grotesque body is the collective body of the people, the images of the grotesque body should definitely have grandiose proportions. Therefore the main themes of these bodily references are fertility and growth resulting in abundance.

The main principle of grotesque realism is degradation. By degradation is meant the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal and abstract to the material level, i.e. to the sphere of earth and body. David Bristol states:

[T]he basic principle of grotesque or Carnival realism is to represent everything socially and spiritually exalted on the
material, bodily level.[...] [which] includes cursing, abusive and irreverent speech, symbolic and actual thrashing, and images of inversion and downward movement, both cosmological (the underworld, hell, devils) and anatomical (the buttocks, genitalia, visceral functions). (22-23)

In the cosmic aspect, “upward” intends a movement towards heaven and “downward” means a movement towards earth. Earth is the grave and the womb; it devours and swallows up everything. At the same time it gives birth and aids in resurrection. In the bodily aspect the upper part is constituted by the face and the head and lower part by the belly, the genital organs and the buttocks, that is the procreative and defecative realms of the body. To degrade an object means to hurl something into the womb of the earth, which will result in the death, regeneration and rebirth of the object or into the lower stratum of the body where defecation, copulation, conception, pregnancy and childbirth take place.

The classical and the modern aesthetic canons are more or less similar in spirit and hence any of these two names can be used for that canon which is opposed to the grotesque canon. The grotesque canon is always interested in the lower bodily and earthly regions whereas the classical canon or the new aesthetic canon is interested in the upper realm of the earth and the body. Thus if the modern aesthetic canon abhorred
anything related to the body, the grotesque canon exulted in the body and bodily images.

Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist see in the body a metaphor for the state. “The body is a common metaphor for the state, and xenophobic societies which are trying to control the behavior of their citizens and keep them from outside contacts often stress the idea of keeping the body pure” (311). Thus according to them Bakhtin’s image of the grotesque body is the image of a state that fights against the repression of Stalinism. The meticulous care which Joyce takes in the detailing of the human body by giving an organ for each chapter and his overindulgence in grotesque realism show a similar tendency to fly over the nets of religion, nation and language. Mockery and parody of these establishments, which expressed the carnival spirit of the people, were only safety valves for the escape of the pressure mounted up by them in the society.

Thus we have seen that “polyphony,” “carnival,” and “dialogue” are interrelated concepts in Bakhtin. “Polyphony” and “carnival” are both terms of “transgression”—one in the realm of literature and other in the realm of society. Textual polyphony is therefore the result of a “carnivalization” of literature. These interrelated terms of Bakhtin’s poetics find an echo in Joyce’s Ulysses also. Many critics find a lot of similarities between Joyce and Bakhtin. Julia Kristeva adds the names of “modern”
novelists like Joyce, Proust and Kafka to the list of polyphonic writers mentioned by Bakhtin: Rabelais, Swift and Dostoevsky (71). R. B. Kershner, likewise, thinks, “all of Bakhtin’s major concepts seem best and most obviously illustrated by Ulysses and Finnegans Wake” (17). Our examination in the following pages of “polyphony,” “dialogue,” and “carnival” as they appear in Ulysses is meant to prove the general polyphonic nature of all fiction.
Notes

1 The term “polyphonic” is opposed to the term “monologic.” According to Bakhtin, the “canonised” genres like the epic, the tragedy and the lyric are “monologic,” i.e. they try to establish a single style and a unified voice, which expresses a singular world-view. But prose literature and novelistic discourse in particular are “polyphonic” or “dialogic.” Bakhtin sees novel as a “developing genre” that expresses “anticlosure” in contrast to the epic that expresses “closure” (D 7). According to him, “The novel, after all, has no canon of its own. It is, by its very nature, not canonic. It is plasticity itself. It is a genre that is ever questing, ever examining itself and subjecting its established forms to review” (ibid 39). If the classical novelists like Tolstoy insisted on “closure” and “finalizability” in their novels, the writers like Dostoevsky preferred to leave their works “open” and “unfinished.” What Bakhtin means here is that a novelist like Tolstoy is a monologic writer and a novelist like Dostoevsky a polyphonic/dialogic writer.

2 Bakhtin nowhere uses “she” in referring to the “hero,” “author” or “reader.” This is the reason why we are also using “he” in such places in this dissertation.

3 “Uncle Charles Principle” simply means this: “the narrative idiom need not be the narrator’s” (Kenner, Joyce’s Voices 18). Wyndham Lewis sees a lack of decorum in the use of a particular word in a passage in A Portrait.
of The Artist as a Young Man. According to him, the word “repaired” in the following passage is inappropriate to serious works of fiction: “Every morning, therefore, uncle Charles repaired to his outhouse but not before he had greased and brushed scrupulously his back hair and brushed and put on his tall hat” (Joyce, Portrait 254). But Kenner challenges this observation of Lewis for he thinks that the word “‘repaired’ wears invisible quotation marks” (17) and is in fact the words of uncle Charles himself. This according to him is a case of “the normally neutral narrative vocabulary pervaded by a little cloud of idioms, which a character might use, if he were managing the narrative” (ibid 17).

4 Discourse according to Bakhtin is “language in its concrete living totality, and not language as the specific object of linguistics, something arrived at through a completely legitimate and necessary abstraction from various aspects of the concrete life of the word” (PDP181).

5 An “utterance” consists of a “verbal” and an “extraverbal” or “implied” or “implicit” part. The linguistic matter constitutes the verbal part. “The implicit part of the utterance is nothing more than the interlocutors’ common horizon of spatiotemporal, semantic, and evaluative (axiological) elements” (Todorov 42).