

Rainer Grutman

## Mono versus Stereo:

### Bilingualism's Double Face

Although literary scholars have started to acknowledge the dynamic character of literary language, little progress has been made in the field of its actual study since the heyday of stylistics. This paper offers an application of one major exception to this rule: Mikhail Bakhtin's heteroglossia model, which tried to describe literature from a more diversified point of view. The analysis of two examples shows nevertheless that Bakhtin unilaterally celebrates the "stereo" qualities of language blending, and leaves no room for "mono" texts, which use polyglot devices as borders much more than as bridges between cultures.

. . . *the convergence of the voices (of the codes) becomes writing, a stereographic space. . .*

Barthes<sup>1</sup>

When Roland Barthes suggested in *S/Z* that the literary work was a stereographic space, a quasi-musical partition of codes, he put forward an idea that would prove extremely successful among students of literature, for it has almost become a commonplace to assert that literary language has not one but many different, hierarchically ordered layers. Of course there remains a lack of consensus about the ways in which issues like stylistic variation or multilingualism are to be addressed. Indeed, scholars focusing on the form of literary language on the one hand and those who are more concerned with its function on the other hand are barely on speaking terms.

During the first half of this century, European schools of stylistic and rhetorical analysis considered the language of a work of art—and even the language of an author—as an organic whole that could serve as a yardstick for the interpretation of such “deviations” as language blending or word borrowing.<sup>2</sup> In the mid-1930s, however, a Russian scholar by the name of Mikhail Bakhtin thought that a more diversified view of literature could grant precious insights into the actual functioning of literary language. For unfortunate political reasons, his research on Rabelais, Dostoyevsky and language in general only recently found its way to Western readers. But the discovery of his writings has prompted a number of studies that endeavor to unlace the straight jacket of unifying structuralism. Crucial to this critique is the idea of diversity or, in Bakhtin’s terms, *heteroglossia* (from ancient Greek *hetero* “other, different” and *glossa*, “tongue, language”).

*Authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters are merely those fundamental compositional unities with whose help heteroglos-*

*sia [raznorečie] can enter the novel; each of them permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships. . .*<sup>3</sup>

Taken at face value, Bakhtin's thesis seems feasible for the study of multilingualism, especially since he claims its validity for fiction at large. In these pages, however, I shall argue that it actually hampers the development of a broadly based poetics of bilingualism.

### **Literary and Textual Bilingualism**

Within the framework of such a poetics, bilingualism is to be understood in a specific sense. Leonard Forster rightly states on the first page of *The Poet's Tongues*: "I shall be dealing with polyglot poets and the poetry they write, which is not necessarily polyglot."<sup>4</sup> There is indeed an appreciable difference between a writer who creates separate works each in a different language and one who uses the stylistic resources of foreign speech in his predominantly monolingual texts. A *bilingual author* has an audience in every single one of the languages in which he chooses to write. The examples of Fernando Arrabal, Samuel Beckett and Vladimir Nabokov spring to mind here. A *text*, however, can only be bilingual if it makes a *relevant use* of other languages. In order to clarify this point, I shall refer briefly to Paul Grice's "logic of conversation." Starting from the idea that conversations are "cooperative efforts" and often take a mutually accepted direction, the logician formulates a rule for their participants:

*Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.*<sup>5</sup>

More precisely, each contribution should respect the Kantian maxims of Quantity (information), Quality (truth), Relation (relevance) and Manner (clarity). The same can be said for the act of reading, which is a sort of conversation between a reader and a text. Consequently, not only a work which uses a single code (i.e., a formal system of communication) will be monolingual but also a text which refuses to convey its message(s) in more than one tongue. The juxtaposition of equivalent versions (as in a so-called “bilingual” dictionary, for instance) violates Grice’s maxims of Quantity (it provides too much information) and of Relation (it lacks relevance).

Broadly speaking, the author who wants to suggest bilingualism without exceeding the monolingual competence of his audience, has three poetic devices at his disposal: allusion, translation and commentary. I shall speak of an allusion when the language of the narrated “story” (i.e., what really happened) does not reach the more explicit level of the literary “discourse” (i.e., the text we read).<sup>6</sup> The following exchange from Joyce’s *Ulysses* illustrates the technique:

*Is it French you are talking, sir?* the old woman said to Haines. Haines spoke to her again a longer speech, confidently. *Irish*, Buck Mulligan said. *Is there Gaelic on you?* *I thought it was Irish*, she said, *by the sound of it.*<sup>7</sup>

There is obviously no need for the reader to have any knowledge of Gaelic, which is completely lost in the process of representation. But the writer can also opt for a more direct confrontation with the peculiarities of foreign speech while still communicating with his readers in the code that they share. When Sir Walter Scott published *Waverley* (1814), Latin was a must for the educated and the socially advantaged, so he could easily let one of his characters quote a Roman historian when requested to give his opinion on the outcome of the Jacobite uprising:

*Why, you know, Tacitus saith "In rebus bellicis maxime dominatur Fortuna," which is equiponderate with our own vernacular adage, "Luck can maist in the mellee."*<sup>8</sup>

The novelist manages to propose a translation without putting a didactic burden on his text, which leaves a wide margin of freedom open to the reader, who can either skip or read the Latin quote. Still, because of the double standard it maintains, such a *translation* within the body of a text is not authentically bilingual since it does not call upon any polyglot competence. The aim of a translation, indeed, is not so much to complete the original as to replace it in the reader's mind, for the most successful translation is the one that will not be recognized as such. A third stylistic device, which I label *commentary*, comes closer to true bilingualism: The text does not just elucidate the referential meaning of the utterance, but comments upon its more subdued cultural connotations. When, in Lawrence's *Women in Love*, Ursula Brangwen calls dominant male behaviour "a lust for bullying—a real *Wille zur Macht*—so base, so petty. . .," Rupert Birkin makes the following point:

*I agree that the Wille zur Macht is a base and petty thing. But with the Mino, it is the desire to bring this female cat into a pure stable equilibrium, a transcendent and abiding rapport with the single male. Whereas without him, as you see, she is a mere stray, a fluffy sporadic bit of chaos. It is a volonté de pouvoir, if you like, a will to ability, taking pouvoir as a verb.*<sup>9</sup>

By juxtaposing translations that have such a different ring in English ("a lust for bullying" and "a will to ability") yet are supposed to mean the same in German and in French (*la volonté de pouvoir* being the equivalent of Nietzsche's *die Wille zur Macht*), Birkin's comment becomes truly metalinguistic in nature. While the harsh German sounds suggest violence, the French language

confirms its well-known penchant for rhetorical niceties, as Ursula stresses in her reply: “Sophistries!”

None of these devices, whether in a fictional or in a real world, amounts to real bilingualism, though the commentary in Lawrence’s *Women in Love* comes very close. In addition to being a cultural reference, however, the foreign speech of the truly bilingual text, as I define it, will be assigned a specific function within the economy of the work in general.<sup>10</sup> The presence of a second language does not always imply the presence of what could be called a *second reader*, but only if it does—if the knowledge of a foreign language is necessary to the understanding of the text—will bilingualism be a real issue. Logically, the polyglot nature of a given work is not so much a matter of quantity as of quality, and the functions of foreign speech can be as diverse as they are numerous. One way of avoiding oversimplifications at this level is to pay close attention to the actual form of loan words in the text. This is precisely where Bakhtin’s model, a critique of traditional and more formalist stylistics, shows a tendency to caricature and why, invaluable as though it may seem, it has to be nuanced for an in-depth study of textual bilingualism.

### **Heteroglossia and Bilingualism**

The first problem is a terminological one. It is very hard to know what Bakhtin exactly means by *heteroglossia*, for the chapter “Raznorečie v romane” of his book *Voprossy Literaturny i Estetiki* (1975) has been translated as both “Heteroglossia in the Novel” and “Le plurilinguisme dans le roman.”<sup>11</sup> Yet according to the *Oxford Russian Dictionary*, “raznorečie”—an obsolete word for “contradiction”—does not really allow for either version. The Russian scholar turned an archaism into a neologism by giving it an entirely new meaning, which can more readily be subsumed under the heading of “internal (regional, social etc.) variation” than under that of “external varia-

tion" (bi- or multilingualism). The usual translations are thus misleading since they are constructed on the etymons *glossa* and *lingua*, which both mean "language" in its plainest sense, as in *polyglot* or *bilingual*. This semantic vagueness is all the more unfortunate since the multiplicity of tongues and what Bakhtin calls the "polyphony" of voices seem to be two sides of the same coin.

If terminological ambiguity remains an altogether superficial phenomenon, the same can hardly be said of the way in which so-called dialogic language is restricted to prose writing and particularly to the novel. As a matter of fact, "heteroglossia" only applies to a segment of that genre, for it is not to be encountered in just any novel, even though Bakhtin maintains that monologic novels have been replaced by and large by dialogic ones:

*in the nineteenth century the distinctive features of [dialogic novels] become the constitutive features for the novelistic genre as a whole.*<sup>12</sup>

For all his enthusiasm, Bakhtin is less preoccupied with an accurate description of the perceived reality of the novel than with the formulation of its prescriptive norms. Already with *Don Quixote* (1605-1615), we are told by the Russian critic, emerges a new imperative:

*the novel must be a full and comprehensive reflection of its era. . . the novel must be a microcosm of heteroglossia.*<sup>13</sup>

Admittedly, this may be an accurate appraisal of the prose of Scott, Dickens or Balzac. But why discard the bulk of novel writing? Why prefer a theory based solely on a canon for which the principles of selection are never defined? Novels that pretend to "reflect their era," as Bakhtin says, are quite often referred to as "time novels,"<sup>14</sup> which shows how particular a place they occupy in literary history. By focusing only on polyphonic works of prose, Bakhtin has provided literary studies with an

incomplete theory, thereby jeopardizing further research applications and transforming heteroglossia into an ad hoc tool, rather than a heuristic principle.

### **Verse and prose: mono versus stereo?**

Bilingualism in many ways mirrors the plural discourses that are at work within a single language. Bakhtin does not rule out such an idea, since he defines the novel from the outset as

*a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized.*<sup>15</sup>

Heteroglossia would be the rule and bilingualism the marked case. However, one ought to be careful when arbitrarily grafting the “dialogic principle” (Todorov) upon polyglot texts, as will become clear in the following reading of a poem by Raimbaut de Vaqueiras (twelfth century). Born in the vicinity of Orange, in today’s Vaucluse (Southeastern France), Vaqueiras is part of the second great wave of Provençal troubadours and as such a contemporary of Arnaut Daniel, Bertran de Born and Peire Vidal. He traveled extensively before joining the Fourth Crusade during which he would be lost in battle. His works show an unusual stylistic variety, for he was “a versatile craftsman and an able linguist.”<sup>16</sup> Composed around 1190 on a journey through Northern Italy, *Domna, tant vos ai preiada* stages an amorous debate between a Provençal minstrel and a Genoese countrywoman whose favors he seeks.

*Domna, tant vos ai preiada,* SO OFTEN, lady, I have asked you  
*si.us plaz, q'amar me voillaz,* please to love me, & please, that I be  
*qu'eu sui vostr' endomenjaz,* your devoted slave; for you  
*car es pros et enseignada* are noble, educated, have  
*e toz bos prez autreiaz;* each honest virtue firmly; so  
*per qe.m plai vostr'amistaz.* your love would please me.<sup>17</sup>

In alternating stanzas, each character speaks his or her own language (Occitanian or Genoese). According to Leonard Forster,

[t]he two dialects are deemed to be mutually comprehensible to the speakers—and of course to the poet's audience. They serve the purpose of neat characterization.<sup>18</sup>

This seems to make a lot of sense, except for the fact that a medieval poem is not likely to exploit language as a national and/or social label. The very notion of nationalism was foreign to the Middle Ages, and it does not seem at all obvious that Raimbaut's audience had a solid knowledge of Genoese. Here, the main bilingual interaction takes place between the two fictional characters, who do not need an interpreter, for the woman knows very well what the gentle knight is aiming for.

*Jujar, voi no sei corteso* YOU THINK you're being courtly, joglar?  
*qe me chaidejai de zo,* What you think you're asking for?  
*qe niente no faró.* Wouldn't do it anyway, not if I  
*Ance fossi voi apeso!* saw you were going to be hanged

... ..

*Tal enojo ve diró.* Here are some sweet nothings for you:  
*sozo, mozo, escalvao!* you cruddy dope, bald-headed asshole!

The shepherdess's fierce resistance to the insistent prayers of her would-be lover no doubt parodies the conventions of medieval lyric. The Italian critic Furio Brugnolo claims that Raimbaut's poem even subverts the language of the genre, for its dual structure foregrounds both heteroglossia (the right to reply produces a "parodic styliza-

tion")<sup>19</sup> and a parallel use of two languages (bilingualism). Subsequently and very surprisingly, Brugnolo goes to great lengths to show that Raimbaut's dialogue is actually *not* akin to what Bakhtin had in mind. Because of the introduction of an authentic foreign code (the Genoese dialect), *Domna, tant vos ai preiada* is a construction of two discourses, of two autonomous voices.<sup>20</sup> In spite of what one is tempted to call the poem's split character, both voices are part of one system, according to Brugnolo, i.e., the Provençal *koiné*, the dominant poetic language. Here too, his reference is Bakhtin who maintains:

*Double-voiced, internally dialogized discourse is also possible, of course, in a language system that is hermetic, pure and unitary, a system alien to the linguistic relativism of prose consciousness; it follows that such discourse is also possible in the purely poetic genres. But in those systems there is no soil to nourish the development of such discourse in the slightest meaningful or essential way. . . Such poetic and rhetorical double-voicedness, cut off from any process of linguistic stratification, may be adequately unfolded into an individual dialogue, into individual argument and conversation between two persons, even while the exchanges in the dialogue are immanent to a single unitary language: they may not be in agreement, they may even be opposed, but they are diverse neither in their speech nor in their language.*<sup>21</sup>

By asserting that the exchanges are neither multidiscursive nor multilingual ("*non pluridiscorsive né plurilinguistiche*"), the Italian translation of Bakhtin used by Brugnolo only adds to the confusion. Yet the latter's analysis itself allows us to challenge the view that he is so eager to promote. Does he not argue that the contrastive nature of the poem operates not only on a linguistic level but also on a stylistic and even sexual one, the vocabulary of the countrywoman being more plebeian than the elegant rhetoric of the troubadour? Does Brugnolo not sug-

gest that the Genoese stanzas play a far from passive role by imprinting a “new” vision upon the text as a whole? Their crudeness is such that, after admitting defeat, the knight himself resorts to a more vulgar metaphor in his last reply:

*Domna, en estraing cossire*    *LADY, you have made me shy,*  
*m'avez mes et en esmai;*    *bound me with despair, dismay.*  
*mas enqera. us preiarai*    *But may I demonstrate? I pray*  
*que voillaz q'eu vos essai,*    *allow me to try you hard and show*  
*si cum provenzals o fai,*    *how a Provensal can do it, once*  
*qant es pojatz.*    *he's up and mounted.*

How then, can Brugnolo reach the conclusion that the debate merely exhibits an invented duality?<sup>22</sup> Once again, the answer can be found in Bakhtin's writings, where two basic distinctions are made: the first between poetry and prose, and the second between monophony and polyphony. Combined into a single system, they show the following interaction: Bakhtin's essay, *The Discourse of the Novel*, considers only two of four possibilities: single-voiced poetry 1) and dialogic prose 4). These are the rule, for poetry can never really be double-voiced 2) and monologic novels 3) are not “of any significance”<sup>23</sup> to him. But a larger perspective may prove necessary. Not only can poetry have dialogic qualities, as we have just

---

		<b>Mono</b>		<b>Stereo</b>
<b>Poetry</b>	1	<i>single-voiced</i>	2	<i>double-voiced</i>
<b>Prose</b>	3	<i>monologic</i>	4	<i>dialogic</i>

---

**Table 1.** Bakhtin's double dichotomy

seen, but polyglot novels do not necessarily show ideological conflict, and their language cannot always be taken as a transparent means of representation. We should not forget that literature is fiction, and that it is only expressed in a natural language for practical reasons, but that even the reported speech of characters does not follow the rules of

spoken language as we know it. By the same token, the presence of, say, German does not always tell the reader something about either Germany as a country or the Germans as a people. Just as it was quite normal during ten centuries of medieval and Renaissance art to write in another language than one's native tongue, it was completely acceptable to use a wide variety of real or imaginary languages without even trying to give them any social or sociolinguistic relevance. The French humanist François Rabelais (1490-1553), one of Bakhtin's favorite authors, will illustrate this point.

### **Billingsgate and Bilingualism**

Rabelais's playful use of the French idiom has become a critical commonplace. Bakhtin himself has argued that the "verbal matrix" achieved by mingling refined speech and *billingsgate* evokes the carnivalesque atmosphere of the marketplace.<sup>24</sup> It has been emphasized considerably less that Rabelais also drew material from many other, mainly European, languages. As a matter of fact, his multilingualism pushed him to create new words and expressions, or to give new meanings to existing ones. Thus *Pantagruel, King of the Dipsodes* (first published in 1532 and revised in 1542) displays the dazzling linguistic richness of the sixteenth century, an era that ended a thousand years of monolingual Latin control over the body of written literature. In its ninth chapter, the giant who lends his name to the book meets

*a man of handsome stature and elegant in every bodily feature, but pitiably wounded in various parts, and in such sorry condition that he seemed to have made his escape from the dogs. . .*

Pantagruel asks him five questions:

“Who are you? Where are you coming from? Where are you going? What are you seeking? And what is your name?”<sup>25</sup>

At that moment, the narrative is suspended, for the unknown companion, though starving and broke, chooses to express himself in ten foreign and three artificial languages instead of answering straightforwardly. In order, they are the following: High German, *Antipodean*, Italian, Scottish (and not English as many translations suggest), Basque, *Patelinois*, Dutch, Spanish, Danish, Hebrew, Greek, *Utopian* and Latin. Only at the very end of the chapter will he switch to French and reveal his name (Panurge), where he is coming from (Turkey), his destination (Pantagrue’s company) and his desire (to be fed). What then, one wonders, is the purpose of all the polyglot passages that lie in between, since they fail to contribute to the unfolding of the action?

First, Panurge speaks High German:

“*Juncker, Gott geb euch Glück unnd hail. . .*”  
 (“My Lord, God give you happiness and good fortune. . .”),

to which Pantagrue replies:

“My friend, I don’t understand a thing of this gibberish; so, if you want to be understood, speak another language.”<sup>26</sup>

Instead, the beggar switches to a fictitious language with a supposedly obscene message. The use of real Italian and Scottish does not yield any better results, so he turns to Basque:

“. . . *Genicoa plasar vadu*” (“if God please.”)

At which point someone in the audience seems to have seen the light (“Are you there, *Genicoa*?”), only to be lost again:

“Are you speaking Christian, my friend, or *Pathelin* language?”<sup>27</sup>

The terms of the question are not innocent, for in the Middle Ages speaking Christian meant (as it still does in a number of Romance languages) speaking like a civilized human being. Panurge's reply in Dutch is most revealing:

*“Heere, ie en spreeke anders geen taele, dan kersten taele: my dunct nochtans, al en seg ie u niet een woordt, myuen noot v claert ghenonch wat ie beglere; gheest my unyt bermherticheyt yet waer un ie ghevoet mach zunch.”*

*“Lord, I speak no language but Christian language; yet it appears to me [that], even if I don't say a word, my need explains to you enough what I desire; give me out of charity something to eat.”*<sup>28</sup>

Pantagruel and his followers fail to perceive that Panurge's miserable condition more than adequately bespeaks his needs and his wants, so the hobo eventually grows tired of repeating the same demands over and over again:

*“Signor, de tanto hablar yo soy cansado.”*

He gives it another try in Danish, before turning to the heavier artillery of Hebrew, Greek and Latin. It is worth noting in this respect that the first two languages had just been introduced into the learned curriculum alongside Latin. (*The Collegium Trilingue* was founded in 1518 at the University of Louvain.) Although Panurge's interlocutors identify most of these tongues, they still fall short of understanding them, and the exhausted traveler finally resorts to his “native mother tongue.”<sup>29</sup>

A closer look at the communicative structure of the chapter shows that while some languages indeed remain completely obscure others are actually recognized by the participants engaged in the conversation. French, the official language of the kingdom as of 1539, is of course favored, while Dutch as well as Scottish are obviously too exotic. But what are we to think of the fact that both Spanish—spread most zealously by Charles V—and Italian—the quintessential expression of the Renaissance—

sound unfamiliar to Pantagruel and his partners? Yet they seem to be able to label other languages: Basque, Danish, German and, strangely enough, all of the imaginary ones. Even more puzzling is the fact that the sixteenth century's three main codes—scholastic Latin, humanist Greek and Biblical Hebrew—provide no better means of understanding than, say, *Utopian*. Every single one of them attempts to convey the condition of the speaker, who simply wants his thirst to be quenched and his hunger to be satisfied. Such is the exact meaning of the final answer which is in French:

*“. . . pour ceste heure, j'ay nécessité bien urgente de repaistre: dentz agües, ventre vuyde, gorge seiche, appétit strident, tout y est délibéré: si me voulez mettre en oeuvre, ce sera basme de me veoir briber; pour Dieu, donnez-y ordre!”*

*“. . . at the present moment I have a very urgent need to feed: sharpened teeth, empty stomach, dry throat, clamorous appetite, everything is set and ready. If you want to put me to work, it will be a pleasure for you to watch me guzzle. For Heaven's sake, arrange it.”<sup>30</sup>*

The parallelism between the passages does not stop here. Panurge invariably addresses Pantagruel as the ruler of Utopia (“*Juncker—Signor mio—Lard—Jona—Heere—Seignor—Myn Herre—Adoni—Despota*”) and his discourse more often than not invokes either Divine or scriptural authority (“*Gott—Genicoa—los preceptos evangelicos—Laah al Adonai chonen ral—per sacra, perque deos deasque omnis*”). Such redundancies are all the more striking when one realizes that the speaker's pitiful apparel should have been a clear enough sign. As a semiotic system, language is indeed incidental compared to visual evidence. Panurge himself states the obvious in ancient Greek: “Speeches are necessary only where the facts under discussion do not appear clearly.”<sup>31</sup>

If considered in the light of Grice's logic, Panurge's utterances fulfill only one requirement (i.e., Quality), for he speaks the truth in all fourteen languages. But the "logic of conversation" assumes that a common aim underlies every exchange, whereas our chapter of *Pantagruel* looks much more like a "pathology of communication,"<sup>32</sup> in which the expression of ideas is sacrificed to the creation of an atmosphere, a lot like conversations about the state of the weather or polite inquiries about a person's health. Why, indeed, knowing that his audience understands only French, would Panurge keep asking for alms in thirteen languages, if not to prolong the contact in the hope of being fed? In spite of an impressive display of linguistic competence, there is no real dialogue between the participants, except at the very end. In Armine Kotin's words:

*We are in the presence of an overwhelming number of signifiers lacking signifieds, an excess of. . . audible signals without concepts.*<sup>33</sup>

The lucubrations repeat each other, add very little to the French discourse, and are unnecessary, given the vagabond's physical appearance. They are in fact highly redundant monologues that, rather than merging into a stereophonic sound, repeatedly give rise to *monophonic noise*.

The link between this compartmentalization and the language theories favored by Rabelais himself is symptomatic, because *Pantagruel's* ninth chapter has been seen as championing the suppression of differences between natural and forged languages. As M.A. Screech has observed,

*perhaps Rabelais was showing us how vital it is to know the conventional meanings attached to sound and symbol before we can hope to understand. Unless we do know them, human language, meaningful to some speakers, is laughable gibberish.*<sup>34</sup>

The characters' reactions prove this critic right. In *Pantagruel*, Gallic humor and the fear of the unknown go hand in hand, for medieval belief had it that only Lucifer *spoke in tongues*. In reply to Panurge's first imaginary language, Epistémon says: "I think it's a language of the Antipodes; the devil himself couldn't get his teeth into it."<sup>35</sup> And, as we have noticed, after the passage in the presumed Patelinois, he goes on to ask Panurge if his speech is "Christian." The wall thus erected between good and bad languages matches Rabelais' centrifugal bilingualism, which separates rather than joins languages.

### **Heteroglossia revisited**

These brief examples, all of which deserve further analysis, have brought to light several of the paradoxes inherent in Mikhail Bakhtin's theory. First, as shown in *table I*, heteroglossia cannot account for all works of literature, but only for those novels where language diversity creates the illusion of a dialogue between social entities ("a multiplicity of social voices"). Rabelais's *Pantagruel* and Raimbaut's poem both prove that the theses presented by Bakhtin in *The Discourse of the Novel* are hard to defend in the light of textual evidence, and that bilingualism may or may not serve a dialogic (heteroglossic) purpose. Bakhtin's views fail to reach the general status of validity they claim because of two fallacies. On the one hand, he unwittingly commits an error known in classical logic as a "deduction by generalization," when his argument follows the lines of this false syllogism: Many modern novels establish a dialogue between various speech types; X is a novel; it is therefore dialogic (or it is not a real novel). Not only does Bakhtin generalize the case of some novels, notably those of Dostoyevsky, but he furthermore eliminates the possibility of other genres sharing basic characteristics of heteroglossia with fiction. In spite of all its luminous insights, his essay offers a very specific and rather limited vantage point.

A poetics of bilingualism as such will have to go beyond those boundaries. It must allow for a variety of texts—literary and non-literary alike—as well as for a wide array of interpretations. At the end of these pages, instead of venturing into yet another series of generalizations, I will draw some obvious conclusions from the examined material. It is completely natural to expect some degree of interactive play to result from the juxtaposition of different languages in the same textual space. As a matter of fact, everyone knows puns that directly derive their comic effect from foreign speech, and in the more elaborate texts of literature, such playfulness can yield very surprising results. To a medieval audience familiar with the conventions of the love lyric, for instance, the Genoese stanzas of *Domna*. . . must have come as a shock. Such a stereo effect, however, need not be achieved by means of bilingualism; when Barthes spoke of “voices” and “codes,” in the line that I used as an epigraph, he did not have complete languages in mind primarily, but rather structures existing in every single language.

Last but not least, there are a number of texts which make use of polyglot devices and *not* of stereo writing. Here, languages are kept apart in order to give an impression of cosmopolitanism or of genuine plurality. The technique is very much related to *translation* (code B repeats what has been uttered in code A), for each language holds its ground with little contamination. The reader can skip the foreign passages simply because they are redundant and merely generate “*mono*” noise. Panurge’s answers to Pantagruel’s queries are a case in point, yet so are the bilingual directions accompanying most consumer goods in Canada, for example. In those instances where one language goes as far as to “exclude” another language, bilingualism, instead of celebrating the joyous carnival of cultural differences, shows its other, uglier face, and becomes some kind of double monolingualism.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Barthes, Roland. 1974. *S/Z*. Trans. Richard Miller. New York: Hill and Wang, 21.
- <sup>2</sup> I could list a number of publications on "The foreign word in the writings of. . .," but one example, from the master himself, will do: Spitzer, Leo. 1928. Sprachmischung als Stilmittel und als Ausdruck der Klangphantasie, in his *Stilstudien, II, Stiltsprachen*. München: Max Hueber, 84-124.
- <sup>3</sup> Bakhtin, M.M. 1981. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 263.
- <sup>4</sup> Forster, Leonard. 1970. *The Poet's Tongues: Multilingualism in Literature*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1. I have myself tackled some of the issues involved in the study of bilingualism as such in Grutman, Rainer. 1990. Le bilinguisme littéraire comme relation intersystémique. *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 17: 3-4, 198-212.
- <sup>5</sup> Grice, Paul. 1989. *Studies in the Way of Words*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 26.
- <sup>6</sup> The distinction appears in Chatman, Seymour. 1979. *Story and Discourse*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press. For a more recent view, see Brooks, Peter. 1992. *Reading for the Plot*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 7-23.
- <sup>7</sup> Joyce, James. 1986 (1922). *Ulysses. The Corrected Text*. London-Harmondsworth: The Bodley Head-Penguin, 12, lines 425-428.
- <sup>8</sup> Scott, Walter. 1985 (1814). *Waverley*. Hamondsworth: Penguin, 335. The literal translation reads: "In matters of war Fortune mostly rules."
- <sup>9</sup> Lawrence, D.H. 1960 (1921). *Women in Love*. Hamondsworth: Penguin, 167.
- <sup>10</sup> Such is also the opinion of Furio Brugnolo. 1983: "intendo per plurilinguismo poetico quel particolare procedimento consistente nell'impiego simultaneo di due o più idiomi differenti, in successione o alternanza prestabilita, all'interno di un medesimo testo poetico in quanto unità formale" (*Plurilinguismo e lirica medievale*. Rome: Bulzoni, 5. Emphasis added).
- <sup>11</sup> Bakhtin. *Dialogic Imagination*, 301. 1978. *Esthétique et théorie du roman*. Trans. Daria Olivier. Paris: Gallimard, 122. Tzvetan Todorov (1981) gives *hétérologie* for "raznorečie," thus reserving *hétéroglossie* for "raznojazyčie" and *hétérophonie* for "raznogolosie." See his *Le Principe dialogique*. Paris: Seuil, 89.
- <sup>12</sup> Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 414.

- 13 Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 411.
- 14 Hasubek, Peter. 1968. Der Zeitroman. *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 87: 219-245.
- 15 Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 262. Emphasis added.
- 16 Hill, Raymond T. and Thomas G. Bergin. 1973. *Anthology of the Provençal Troubadours*, 2nd ed. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, v.1, 145. A critical edition of Raimbaut's works by Joseph Linskill appeared in The Hague in 1964.
- 17 The original quotations are taken from Martín de Riquer. 1975. *Los trovadores*. Barcelona: Planeta, v. 2, 816-819, who follows Linskill. The rather bawdy translation is by Paul Blackburn. 1978. *Proensa. An Anthology of Troubadour Poetry*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 138-141.
- 18 Forster, *The Poet's Tongues*, 12.
- 19 Brugnolo, *Plurilinguismo*, 31; Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 364.
- 20 Brugnolo, *Plurilinguismo*, 63.
- 21 Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 325 (quoted by Brugnolo, *Plurilinguismo*, 64, footnote 108).
- 22 Brugnolo, *Plurilinguismo*, 12-13, 25 and 65.
- 23 Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 414.
- 24 Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 176. See also *Rabelais and his World*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1968, 145-195. Translator Helene Iswolsky is particularly accurate in calling the popular speech of the marketplace "billingsgate," for the word refers to "one of the gates of London, and hence of the fish-market there established." (*OED* 2, 1989, 195.)
- 25 Rabelais, François. 1991. *Complete Works*. Trans. by Donald M. Frame. Berkeley: University of California Press, 163.
- 26 Rabelais, *Complete Works*, 163.
- 27 Rabelais, *Complete Works*, 164.
- 28 Rabelais, *Complete Works*, 164, my translation.
- 29 Rabelais, *Complete Works*, 166.
- 30 Rabelais. 1964 (1542). *Pantagruel*. Paris: Gallimard, 153. *Complete Works*, 166.
- 31 Rabelais, *Complete Works*, 830, note 10.
- 32 Bastiaensen, Michel. 1974. La rencontre de Panurge. *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 52:3, 552.

- <sup>33</sup> Kotin, Armine. 1977. *Pantagruel*. Language vs. communication. *MLN* 92, 696.
- <sup>34</sup> Screech, M.A. 1979. *Rabelais*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 30.
- <sup>35</sup> Rabelais, *Complete Works*, 164.

Phyllis Wrenn  
Department of French  
Simon Fraser University  
Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6  
Canada  
*Visible Language* 27: 1/2  
Phyllis M. Wrenn,  
©*Visible Language*, 1993  
Rhode Island School of Design  
Providence, RI 02903

Phyllis Wrenn is Associate Professor of French Linguistics in the Department of French, Simon Fraser University in Canada. She holds a Ph.D. in French Linguistics from the University of Toronto. Her research interests are in the fields of French phonology, phonostylistics and text-linguistics; in her most recent publications she has studied the written transcoding of oral language, the expressivity of orthographic innovation, text and performance in the art of Marc Favreau. She is currently working on a typology of the humorous monologue.