

HETEROGLOSSIA IN *GREENVOE*: TEACHING A SCOTTISH NOVEL IN THE CONTEXT OF BRITISH CULTURAL STUDIES

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This paper is concerned with the place of literature in Cultural Studies. I intend to discuss a novel by George Mackay Brown, an Orcadian Scottish writer, in the context of a British Cultural Studies course that I have recently been closely involved in. The first part of the article will describe the history and structure of the course in some detail and I will then go on to consider how my experience of teaching *Greenvoe*<sup>1</sup> for one of the course modules opened up for me a new way of reading the novel, drawing on Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia. The course is the Advanced Certificate in the Teaching of British Cultural Studies offered by Strathclyde University. Though originally designed for a particular group — university and secondary school teachers in Bulgaria—it is not rigidly Bulgaria-specific and is in fact being developed at present into a distance learning degree which will eventually be widely available. Most of my references will be to the situation in Europe but I hope it will appear that our experience there is of relevance elsewhere also.

Bulgaria has been able to take the initiative in this venture because there was already in existence there a network of teachers who had for some years been involved in a British Cultural Studies programme.

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This had been initiated and nurtured by Leah Davcheva, a member of the British Council staff in Sofia who has responsibility for developing British Cultural Studies in the context of English Language teaching. Her vision has informed the project from the start and she is now taking it on to a further stage in developing a syllabus for teaching British Cultural Studies in secondary schools — but more of that later.

The course was set up on the model of other Advanced Certificate courses in Strathclyde University, with four modules, each of which is assessed by a written assignment; the content and balance of the modules, together with the mode of delivery, were worked out in close conjunction with the organisers in Bulgaria. The course participants all had at least three years of teaching experience; a few were from university departments of British Cultural Studies but the majority were teachers in the English Language-medium secondary schools; they represented schools and situations with a wide range of resources and facilities, from those with fully fledged self-access centres and audio-visual support to those which have problems in providing any equipment beyond blackboard and chalk.

The course, which ran for two years, comprised the following four modules: Language and Social Life, Literature and Location, the Media and Classroom Methodology. For reasons both principled and pragmatic, the course had a Scottish focus. It was delivered partly in Bulgaria (an initial six-day session followed by three long weekends) and partly in Glasgow (a three-week Summer School). Lecturers were from the universities of Strathclyde and Glasgow in Scotland and from Veliko Turnovo in Bulgaria. The basic texts for each module were provided as part of the course and other materials were available from British Council Resource Centres in Bulgaria.

The term “British Cultural Studies” requires definition as it is not always clear precisely what it denotes. Montgomery (1994)<sup>2</sup> makes a distinction between “British Studies” (with a focus on social institutions and history) and “British Cultural Studies”, which, following Raymond

Williams, he characterises as the study of “relationships between elements in a whole way of life”, and a concern with the contemporary rather than the historical dimension. At one pole of this continuum we find an emphasis on “traditional” and “high” culture, with a stress on canonical literary texts and the history of social institutions such as the law, the universities, the churches; while at the other pole we see a concern for contemporary cultures and sub-cultures and the study of the variety of cultural forms that exist and sometimes compete across the whole of society.

Montgomery argues that this is not an unbridgeable gulf, and that a principled way of linking the two forms of cultural study, especially in the non-anglophone context, may be provided by language itself, particularly when explored from a sociolinguistic perspective. On the one hand we perceive the construction of social identities through language in terms of class, gender, ethnicity and region — which offer ways of exploring the questions posed in the British Cultural Studies context; on the other, we find the domains associated with major social institutions such as the law, health, religion, the media — which can be approached linguistically in terms of register variation and genre. It should be recognised that in practice, of course, there is no possibility of a purist position in British Cultural Studies, as the study of contemporary culture (and cultures) cannot ignore the existence of the institutions. In a context where language learning is foregrounded, it is particularly valuable to draw on the techniques of sociolinguistic analysis as an approach to both poles in the continuum.

An additional conceptual framework is that of ethnography. Roberts (1994)<sup>3</sup> describes a course at Thames Valley University which offers a very imaginative approach to inter-cultural studies for British Modern Language students in preparation for their year abroad during their degree course. It brings together the focus on texts in Cultural Studies programmes with the focus on communicative use in intercultural communication i.e. the culture as an object of reflection and communicative competence in terms of linguistic routines and social

appropriacy, thus developing a further, intercultural element to communicative competence. While the Thames Valley University course organisers recognise the need for a selected body of knowledge about the foreign language community, its institutions, its values and beliefs, the course aims not so much to impart that body of knowledge as to develop the attitudes and skills that make it possible for the students themselves to acquire further understanding of the target cultures by using the approaches and techniques of the ethnographer. In other words, the emphasis is on acquiring a conceptual framework for understanding cultural difference rather than absorbing a collection of facts. In this way, ethnography provides a possible solution to the problem of how to integrate conceptual work about Britain with experiential work in intercultural communication.

In the Bulgarian course we have been concerned not so much to provide a body of knowledge as to equip participants with the tools of cultural analysis, such as critical linguistics and ethnographic techniques, that would enable them to examine both their own and the target culture — and with this, to develop attitudes that are critical and productive rather than uncritically receptive of apparently authoritative sources of information. The most recent (and still on-going) phase of this project is the Syllabus Development and Writing stage, with which I am closely involved, together with Alan Pulverness, Leah Davcheva and the sixty Bulgarian teachers who belong to the British Studies Network (and all sixty are actively involved in the planning and writing process). The syllabus will be published and ready for use towards the end of 1998.

The cycle of development underlying the design of the syllabus could be described as:

language competence leading to  
communicative competence leading to  
cultural competence leading to  
critical competence leading to  
increased language competence.

This, then is the rationale for the course. I now turn to one of the modules, that on Literature and Location, to illustrate the way in which literary texts are integrated into the culturalist approach. As I have already said, this course uses Scottish culture as an exemplar, and its status as exemplar is made clear, both in the actual teaching and in the choice of texts. The focus on Scotland also provides a valuable insight into the more theoretical concerns about identity expressed for example by Robert Crawford in his book *Identifying Poets*<sup>4</sup>, where he unravels the dialogic voices that contribute to the construction of identity in the work of poets as diverse as the obviously Scots McDiarmid and others with Scottish links such as Robert Frost and Les Murray, concerns which in turn connect with the sense of place and displacement and otherness in post-colonial theory. I should emphasise that I do not propose a simplistic appropriation of post-colonial theory to the Scottish situation — for the Scottish history of empire is complex in terms both of forced emigration and of colonising. Scots were among the most vigorous colonists of the empire, as the cemeteries of North Indian cities and hill stations, for example, make abundantly clear. Nonetheless, the argument from post-colonial criticism that the alienating process of marginalisation experienced by the colonial world has issued in a new energy and freedom that finds its source paradoxically in the very experience of marginality can be illuminating for an understanding of literature in Scotland since the Scottish Literary Renaissance in the 1920s.

The three novels chosen for study on the course included two urban novels, the first, Muriel Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, based in Edinburgh, and the second, Alasdair Gray's *Lanark*, in Glasgow; the third was *Greenvoe*, a novel from Orkney. *Greenvoe* is quite literally a novel written at the margins, for it is written by an Orcadian who has chosen to remain in his homeland and it tells the story of a community on one of the smaller islands of Orkney. I want to consider it here as it produced some very interesting responses and as a result I found myself paying attention to the novel in a new way.

The teachers who did the course loved this novel. They enjoyed its complexity and the highly structured narration, but most of all they responded to a vivid sense of its geographical marginality because it seemed in some ways to match their own sense of existing on the margins. This voice from the far north of Europe spoke in accessible tones to readers in Bulgaria in the far south. Their enthusiasm infected me and I started to think again about this novel that was so familiar to me. And in particular, instead of imagining it primarily in visual terms, as I had always done, I began to listen to its multiplicity of voices.

It is a novel that has received a fair amount of discussion from Scottish critics.<sup>5</sup> George Mackay Brown (who died in 1996) occupies a special place in Scottish literature as one of the best known and most affectionately regarded representatives of the non-urban cultures of Scotland. He writes consistently of Orkney, where he spent almost his entire life, a group of tiny islands to the north of mainland Scotland with a distinctive history and character of their own — very different, for example, both culturally and linguistically, from the Hebridean islands to the West. The novel, first published in 1972, is the story of the small village community on Hellya, one of those islands, to which he gives the name Greenvoe.

The people, their way of life and history are presented by the narrator with little comment and without either nostalgia or brutality. As the novel progresses, we realise that while the seeds of its own decay are to be found within the community, it is the invasion of “progress” from the outside world in the shape of the mysterious organisation Black Star that precipitates its destruction. It could, indeed, be characterised as a dystopian fiction. In presenting this, Brown draws on the parallel history of such an “invasion” in the island of Gruinard on the West coast of Scotland, which earlier in the century was made uninhabitable through being deliberately infected with anthrax for experimental purposes in connection with research on germ warfare. Moreover, the writing of the novel was contemporary with the period

in the 1970s of extensive development of oil exploration in the North Sea, which directly affected the life and culture of the Orkney islands.

The story is presented by a omniscient 3rd person narrative voice, which remains largely impersonal. The narration is built up by the juxtaposition of a set of interrelated narrative strands, the individual stories of different members of the small fishing and farming community, many of which are told in their own voices. Particularly important are the extended stories of the seduction of the upper-class Inga (the Laird's, or hereditary chief's, daughter) by Ivan Westray, the ferryman; the long story of the history of the island, which is in the process of being written by The Skarf, part-time fisherman and passionate Marxist; and the story told by means of the guilt-racked Calvinist imagination of Mrs McKee, the outsider to the island, the minister's mother, who considers herself responsible for her son's alcoholism. We are also given an observer's view of the community through the eyes of Johnny Singh, an Indian pedlar making one of his regular visits to the islands. Each chapter ends with a stage in the Ancient Ritual of the Horsemen, in which members of the farming community take part. (A number of such crop and fertility rituals have been discovered in the North-East of Scotland and the Ritual of the Horsemen is based on aspects of some of these.) The last chapters tell of the arrival of the Black Star organisation. Details about each inhabitant of Greenvoe are filed and they are either employed with the organisation or if unsuitable transferred elsewhere. The island community is broken up. But the novel does not end in total pessimism, for the final chapter tells of the secret return ten years after the deportations of a small group of islanders: the farmers or the children of the farmers who used to enact the Ritual of the Horsemen. They carry out the final stage of the Ritual, which through enacting the springtime return of the crops and of fertility, symbolises resurrection.

As I said earlier, I was particularly interested to observe the Bulgarian teachers' response to the novel. They enjoyed it on many levels, but most often they commented on the fresh perspective that it

opened up for them of British culture. Orkney is monoglossic (Gaelic is not spoken there) yet in the very language used in the novel there is a tension between the received English of the centre (for, unlike many mainland writers, George Mackay Brown uses the dialect of Standard British English), and the act of appropriation which brings that language under the influence of local experience and so leads to the variety of discourses in which these experiences speak themselves. A typical comment from one of the teachers was: "We have been so used to thinking of Britain in the old way as the centre of empire, the site of power, that reading of this experience of marginality within Britain comes both as a shock and a liberation. It makes us feel much closer to you." A related point that our group made was the parallel that they perceived between Orkney (on the edge of the edge of Europe) and their own experience as Bulgarians at the other margin of Europe. It was a comparison that some of them explored further in their literature assignments and in developing teaching materials: for example, comparing the construction of community in a text by a Bulgarian writer with George Mackay Brown's novel; collecting and comparing poems on national identity from the two cultures ("what it means to be Bulgarian" with "what it means to be Scottish"). Affect leading to change of attitude is of fundamental importance in the study of another culture and this kind of shift of attitudes towards the target culture can, precisely, be the moment at which liberation from the stereotyped view of that culture can have its beginning.

The focus in *Greenvoe* on a small, apparently stable community which is invaded by the concerns of the larger world in political, economic and cultural terms is expressed, as I have already said, by means of different strands of communal and personal history and by the recurrent Ritual of the Horsemen, which provides structure to the novel and continuity with the past. Each of the strands has its own distinctive discourse, and some of the most interesting sections are where the different strands are closely interwoven in a single narrative. The novel is indeed marginal in terms of both the Scottish and the



British (English?) centres of power, and celebrates its marginality in part by means of these contrasting voices. Much published criticism of the novel has focused on its descriptive character and the effectiveness of its visual imagery but it was I think in part because, on the Advanced Certificate course, the Literature and Location module followed immediately after that on Language and Society with its emphasis on the varieties of the spoken language that I became so vividly aware of the variety of voices that are given space to speak in this novel.

At the time, I was also reading Robert Crawford's *Identifying Poets* in the introduction to which he suggests that Bakhtin's concept of "heteroglossia" could provide a fruitful approach to questions of the construction of identity/ identities in Scottish contemporary culture.

In *Devolving English Literature* and elsewhere I have been concerned to demonstrate that Scottish culture not only shaped crucially the university subject of 'English Literature', but also produced heteroglot and multicultural kinds of writings which form not a peripheral exception to but a model for international writing in the English-speaking world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Bakhtin's thinking on heteroglossia may provide a useful framework in which to view these contentions, for if language is normally made up of languages — if discourse is always a blend of discourses (scientific, demotic, jargons, dialects) — then, like Caribbean or Australian writing, Scottish writing, in which this blending is frequently explicit, becomes typical rather than eccentric.<sup>6</sup>

It seems to me that Bakhtin's concepts of "dialogic" and "heteroglossic" discourses offer an illuminating approach to Brown's novel. It is so clearly a text compounded largely of voices. While these voices have been acknowledged in critical discussion, there has been a tendency to see them (with the exception of the instances of direct speech) as variants of a central authorial voice: "Whoever the narrator, the dominant sound throughout the book is the supple, suggestive, persuasive voice of George Mackay Brown."<sup>7</sup>

I should at the outset make it clear that I do not intend to argue that *Greenvoe* is a quintessentially Bakhtinian novel; it is not polyphonic, in the sense in which Bakhtin uses that term of Dostoevsky's novels: the discourse of the characters is not freed from authorial control in the Dostoevskian sense and the technique Brown uses most effectively is juxtaposition, which is simultaneously freeing and controlling. I am concerned here not with the issue of polyphony but heteroglossia. I suggest that Bakhtin's ideas of dialogical and monological discourse and heteroglossia in particular offer an illuminating way of reading/hearing the voices that to a large extent constitute the novel. For the purposes of this study I shall draw on *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, Discourse in the Novel and Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*.<sup>8</sup>

*Greenvoe* is, to a quite remarkable extent, a novel of varied voices, which function at several levels. Voices, in the most straightforward sense, are foregrounded throughout. Direct speech plays a major part in the novel, particularly when one realises that every passage of The Skarf's history is read aloud and the assizes on Mrs McKee are presented as the direct speech of the various prosecutors. Moreover, much that might be presented as thought is in fact presented in the form of direct (if silent) speech e.g. in the parallel monologues of the women outside the village shop. I will attempt a more detailed analysis of some of these voices later, but at this point I wish only to emphasise the importance of Bakhtin's conception of heteroglossia as radically social discourses. Language is never completely unitary, can never be completely unitary: not only are there "linguistic dialects in the strict sense of the word (according to formal linguistic markers, especially phonetic),"<sup>9</sup> there are also, always and much more significantly, many different "languages", which are the product of shared ways of experiencing and evaluating the world: "They are each specific points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words, specific world views, each characterised by its own objects, meanings and values."<sup>10</sup> Individual utterances are always at the same time social utterances. It follows that even criticism which purports to deal with

characters in a novel as individuals must not overlook the social saturation of their discourse.

In the long section of *Discourse in the Novel* in which Bakhtin argues for his concept of heteroglossia as the characteristic feature of novelistic as opposed to poetic language, he suggests that the novel is a “dialogical representation of an ideologically freighted discourse,”<sup>11</sup> that all the speaking voices (whether personalised in particular characters or expressed by other means) are to a greater or lesser extent ideologues and idiologemes. In other words, he stresses the radically social nature of novelistic discourse: even when it seems that what we have is simply the speech of a single individual, that utterance cannot but be palimpsestic, an instance of inter-textuality, to use the term adopted by Todorov and Kristeva. In every utterance there can be heard a variety of social and historical voices. This is what is meant initially by dialogism: the fact that the everyday language we use in society is invariably composed of different languages that are in a state of constant argument among themselves, and it is this feature of language that is characteristically explored in the genre of the novel; that this exploration is, indeed, definitive of the novelistic genre.

Bakhtin discusses the dialogic nature of language and in particular the concept of heteroglossia at length and at times, it must be acknowledged, confusingly and repetitively. However, there do seem to be some fixed points. The central concept that runs through his work, spanning the long period from the 1920s to 1975, is dialogism. His view of individual development, which he shared with Vygotsky, was profoundly social and therefore dialogic; so, too, it appears from one of the infrequent specifically theological comments in his work, was his view of religion; and so was his literary criticism, his development of a “prosaics”, as Morson and Emerson<sup>12</sup> describe it.

In *Discourses in the Novel* he argues firstly that the overall distinguishing quality of novelistic discourse is its dialogic nature; secondly, that this is expressed in the novel by the use of heteroglossia. In his discussion of Dickens’ *Little Dorrit* and at greater length in his

work on Rabelais, he develops the term “heteroglossia” to provide a kind of taxonomy of dialogic discourse which offers a useful framework for discussion. It includes:

- (i) the overlap of author’s and characters’ voices;
- (ii) parodic stylisation (Bakhtin later distinguishes in more detail between stylisation and parody but that distinction is not particularly relevant here);
- (iii) inserted sub-authors;
- (iv) incorporated genres;
- (v) to these may be added instances of direct speech, though on the whole these are of less stylistic interest for Bakhtin.

It is difficult to distinguish clearly between Bakhtin’s levels of double-voicing but he seems to regard all these as varieties of double-voiced discourse even when they are not actually contained within the same syntactic utterance (as they generally are in classic free indirect discourse), because he sees them as all contained within the overall authorial “intention”. These categories constitute a special group of double-voicing in as much as they imply (rather than contain) two meanings, two voices, two expressions, because of their dialogical relation in the structure of the work.

To what extent does this taxonomy assist in the analysis of the voices we hear in *Greenvoe*?

- (i) Firstly, we have the voice of the author/narrator. This shades from the “poetic” voice of the opening sentences of the book, through conventional omniscience and implied address to the reader (where information and comment is supplied in brackets<sup>13</sup>), to what Bakhtin would describe as “character zones”; these in turn shade from straightforward free indirect discourse, as in several of the sections dealing with Mrs McKee to a kind of narrative which incorporates echoes of the character’s behaviour (for example, the succession of verbs that describe Bert Kerston’s morning departure: “stowed”, “pushed off”, “swung”, “kicked”, “coughed”, “tore”, compared with

the parallel description of Samuel Whaness' more measured progress: "went", "rowed", "started", "steered").<sup>14</sup>

(ii) Secondly, we have the major parodic social (as opposed to individual) discourses, which are, nonetheless, attached to individual characters. These are The Skarf's discourse of island history imbued with his peculiar blend of mystical Marxism; the Bunyanite *Pilgrim's Progress* discourse associated with Samuel Whaness, particularly the extended Vanity Fair passage at his near-death-by-drowning; and the discourse of Calvinism and religious legalism, which takes place entirely in the imagination of Mrs McKee.

(iii) Thirdly, there is an example of a sub-author in Johnny Singh, the Indian pedlar, who performs the role described by Bakhtin of showing the object of representation in a new light, "a refraction of the author's intentions", "a reaccentuation"<sup>15</sup> of the author's voice in a dialogic manner.

(iv) There are two major examples of incorporated genres, both attached to particular characters: the letter written by Johnny Singh and the card-index compiled by the Guest (the representative of the Black Star organisation). In addition to these, we have the Ritual of the Horsemen, which is introduced initially by the narrator but thereafter appears simply as an independent dramatic text with stage directions and dialogue. In addition to these major examples, there are many minor genres: children's games and ritual chants, traditional Scottish songs, historical legends; and a variety of more briefly indicated discourses associated with particular characters, such as the Lawrentian *Women in Love* discourse associated with Inga and that of *Love Carnal and Divine*, which together with the *Orkneyinga Saga* is linked to Ivan Westray.

(v) Finally, there are the many voices of the other characters, expressed generally in direct speech, each of which is both distinct and recognisable as an individual voice, but also manifests heteroglot qualities. An obvious example is Ben Budge with his sea-faring references and vocabulary.

A section of the novel that has been commented on by earlier critics — Murray and Tait for example end their chapter on *Greenvoe* by discussing it in terms of what they describe as a “virtuoso ‘patch’”<sup>16</sup> — is the description in Chapter 5 of the visit of Ivan Westray and Inga Fortin-Bell to the lighthouse.<sup>17</sup> It is a passage that repays examination in the light of Bakhtin’s discussion of the shift from a Ptolemaic to a Galilean universe of languages and the conception of “outsideness”.<sup>18</sup> The two ideas are related in that

to realise and develop the potential of a language, ‘outsideness’ — the outsideness of another language — is required. That outsideness may lead to an exchange in which each language reveals to the other what it did not know about itself, and in which new insights are produced that neither wholly contained before. ... [The language] can never again naively assume itself to be indisputable, because it has been disputed, may be disputed again, and is always guarding itself against possible disputes. It is now, as Bakhtin writes, ‘contested, contestable and contesting’.<sup>19</sup>

The universe which that language inhabits is now no longer Ptolemaic but Galilean.

The few pages describing the sexual humiliation of Inga function in several ways as a locus for contesting languages. They reflect the basic sexual conflict that has surfaced at intervals throughout the novel, in terms not merely of the two individual characters here involved (though these two do have distinct speech styles expressing opposition of class and gender) but more importantly in terms of the contest of the various discourses of love that these two have learned or are trying out, are testing, in this situation. The short section quoted below gives some idea of Brown’s method. I have numbered the paragraphs for ease of reference.

Ivan, the ferryman and handsome local lecher, has taken Inga to visit the lighthouse and they are about to return to the mainland.

(1) Ivan Westray sent the empty beer can clattering over the skerry.

(2) 'Come on then,' he said to Inga. And he strode down to the boat.

(3) There was a man in the island of Hellya called Alisdair. He was the chief man in the island at that time, and bode at the Hall there. He was the son of Fingal who stayed mostly at Aberdeenshire in Scotland till his death. He was the son of Hamish who was killed in the fighting against those blacks in Africa who were called Fuzzy-Wuzzies; he was mostly at home in Hellya. He was the son of Colin who bought the island for ten thousand gold pieces in the year of the potato famine. Many of the island people sailed overseas, to Canada and New Zealand; later Colin turned over the crofts to be pastures for sheep. Alisdair's son was Robin. He married, a woman called Helen who was at home in Berkshire in England; her father had got his wealth from the manufacture of horns for mechanical carriages. Robin and Helen had one child, a daughter called Inga. She was at school in England, at a place called St. Albert's. Always in summer she betook herself north to her grandfather's estate in the Orkneys. She was said to be a beautiful young woman, though rather lascivious.

(4) The principal keeper was very solicitous. What had Inga been thinking of, to leave home without a coat? It was never safe to venture far in Orkney, even on the likeliest day, without a coat. He could lend her his duffle jacket. He sent the young light-keeper to bring his duffle jacket from the hook. It had been a great pleasure indeed to have Miss Fortin-Bell on their rock. He trusted she would not be long in coming back. Oh, he had almost forget, she hadn't put her name in their visitors' book.

(5) The horn roared.

(6) The third lighthouse-keeper, a dark silent Highlander called Donald McAra, stood at the lighthouse wall and said nothing.

(7) 'Hurry up,' shouted Ivan Westray from the pier. He stood there with the painter coiled in his hand.

(8) The red glow faded from the crags of Hrossey. The wind made a melancholy sough about the white tower.

(9) The principal with the visitors' book and the young light-keeper with the duffle arrived simultaneously at the door. Inga was thrust into the jacket and buttoned up. The sleeves came down below her fingertips. She had to pull the right sleeve back to sign the visitors' book.

(10) 'It iss thickening,' said Donald McAra gloomily from the seaward wall.

(11) 'For hell's sake,' cried Ivan Westray from the concrete steps, 'I can't wait for you all day.' The engine jugged gently.

(12) How man seeketh to know woman: how with many subtle stratagems and with tremblings of the spirit and with alternate dolours and delights he seeketh to find out a way into the core of that mystery — this, gentle readers, is the theme of our romance. Brake stirreth; hart rouseth; the horns sound near and far.

(13) 'Thank you for everything,' said Inga. 'It's been a marvellous day. Super. I'll never forget it.'

(14) She ran down the pier and stepped into the ettling boat. Ivan Westray pushed off with a pole. Flutters of hands from the pier and from the circling boat, cries of farewell. Ivan Westray set her bow for the squat cone of Korsfea.

(15) The Widow held one unstable shroud over her knees. Then the sea was suddenly dense with shrouds. The swathings fell on them, clustered coldly, gave way to yet thicker layers. In two minutes they were swaddled in a blind cocoon. Korsfea had vanished. One roseate outcrop of crag was touched by an ashen finger; it crumbled. Ivan Westray lit a cigarette. Inga looked behind her. An orange glowed high through the fog; the newly lit tower. The orange faded.

This passage includes all the contesting discourses of this section with the exception of Inga's discourse of idealised Lawrentian sex.

(1) is a single sentence of narration (which I designate NV1, to distinguish it from a second and distinct narrative voice). It apparently offers a simple factual description of an action.



(2) gives us Ivan Westray's direct speech followed by a second sentence of NV1. This does not tell us much in isolation but in the context of already acquired knowledge, we recognise it as characteristic of his style of speech: abrupt, a direct command, no politeness markers.

(3) presents another kind of narrative: the parodic stylisation of the *Orkneyinga Saga* (one of the books in Ivan's cabin). The use of this discourse links this particular incident to earlier stories of the island and thereby (thematically rather than stylistically) with The Skarf's history, which is concerned with repeated movements of domination, both by battle and by economic power: here we find references to the Irish potato famine and to the Clearances in Scotland. The use of the term "Fuzzie-Wuzzies" indicates a further layer, drawn this time from the racist discourse of colonialism.

(4) begins with NV1 and then shifts in and out of free indirect, with the speech of the first lighthouse keeper.

(5): this short sentence could be NV1 but in the context of the whole passage it is closer to what I call NV2, or the Poetic Narrative Voice, which appears from time to time. This a poetic "discourse of Nature", which is in terms of the whole novel a privileged voice, but is here, I suggest, ironized by its juxtaposition with the other languages of this section - the effect of what Bakhtin terms "outsideness".

(6): NV1, but with some implication in the third keeper's silence. We have heard the speech of both the courteous first keeper and the younger second keeper (who we know has earlier made sexual advances to Inga) and the silence of this Highlander — not an Orkney man but a Highlander and probably a Gaelic speaker — refers to another language in its very absence of language.

(7): NV1 combined with Ivan Westray's direct speech.

(8): two sentences of NV2 (poetic narrative), which offers an alternative view, a "romantic" view, which is set in question by being positioned very close to Inga's naive romanticism/Romanticism; in (15) this voice is positioned textually as her point-of-view.

(9): NV1.

(10): direct speech with the phonological marker in “iss”.

(11): Ivan Westray’s direct speech set in the frame of NV1. “Jugged” is curious here, as elsewhere in the text Brown uses the more conventional “chug” to describe engine noise. It prompts the speculation (in this reader, at any rate) that the choice of “jugged” at this point may have an intertextual reference to *The Waste Land* with its voices of seduction and conflicting desires.<sup>20</sup>

(12): this is one of the several discourses of love in this section and it belongs to the second book on Ivan’s shelf, *Love Carnal and Divine*. Like the *Orkneyinga Saga*, it is in Bakhtin’s terms, both parody and incorporated genre. It combines elements of courtly love poetry and medieval romance with references to the Biblical *Song of Songs* and poetry in that tradition such as St. John of the Cross, all of which are themselves examples of mixed discourses, in that they draw on the language of sexual passion to explore the mystical experience of divine love. It is also, as a sermon, primarily a spoken genre, and foregrounds the speaking voice in the address to “gentle listeners”. We realise, too, that this elaborate multi-levelled language (which punctuates and parallels the description of the seduction which comes later in this chapter) should be counterpointed to Ivan Westray’s customary unelaborated and virtually unhedged style of speech, for it is also one of the discourses that shape and inform him, and this in turn complexifies our view of him as a site of conflicting ideologies.

(13): Inga’s direct speech, which is clearly marked for both class and gender.

(14): NV1.

(15): mostly NV2, poetic narrative, with a shift to Inga’s perceptual point-of-view at the end.

One of the characteristics of the organisation in this novel of such broadly defined heteroglossic discourses as we have examined is that there is very little interpenetration of one with another. (The final paragraph of the passage mingles them but they still remain separated at the level of the sentence.) In this section the heteroglossia does not

contribute to double-voicing at sub-sentential level, but produces an effect of juxtaposed strands that combine and contrast within the overall narrative, thus producing a broadly double-voiced effect. Each strand should be read as an utterance in the Bakhtinian sense, as the “locus of encounter between my self-consciousness, my mind and the world with all its socio-historical meaning, which is always an answer to a previous utterance and always expects an answer in the future.”<sup>21</sup> The typically modernist practice of juxtaposition employed by Brown in this passage foregrounds the “outsideness” discussed by Bakhtin and effectively de-centres each of the discourses from a Ptolemaic position of dominance. As Morson and Emerson<sup>22</sup> put it, Brown draws “dotted lines” between discourses that “in everyday life have not yet entered into a profound dialogue”.

I would argue that while this section offers a particularly neat and compact example of Brown’s special use of heteroglossia, it is not untypical of the novel as a whole. Throughout, the various idiolects and sociolects are presented without — generally speaking — specific authorial comment, thus requiring the reader to interpret them dialogically in relation to one another.

Bakhtin’s notion of heteroglossia provides an illuminating framework for the analysis of the discourses in this novel but even without that, passages such as the section quoted above offer opportunities for using this text in courses dealing with language and cultural studies. Students can be helped to distinguish and situate the various voices by means of linguistic and sociolinguistic indicators and then to develop their understanding of what these indicators represent culturally in terms of the relationships of intra-cultural positions. I have done this with students at quite a simple level as a register exercise, helping them to separate out the major different strands of discourse and then getting them to work out some of the relations between the various strands. Obviously, the more sophisticated the students, the more detailed and interesting will be their analysis. This approach illustrates the principle that we attempted to apply in the Cultural Studies

course of working from skills to start with, thus leading from a skills-based analysis of texts to asking specific questions about them and then seeking further information about the culture in question.

To return to my starting point — it was being forced to set the novel in a British Cultural Studies context that made me pay attention to what seems to have been this largely neglected aspect of it. Listening to the variety of its languages in terms of register, social dialect and idiolect, I became aware of the variety of sub-cultures that were being represented by this means. I am grateful to the British Cultural Studies course for opening my ears!

### Notes

- 1 Brown, George Mackay. *Greenvoe* (first published 1972); all references are to Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976.
- 2 Montgomery, Martin. 'Institutions and Discourse', *British Studies Now*, 2 (July 1993).
- 3 Roberts, Celia. 'Ethnographic Approaches to Cultural Learning', *British Studies Now*, 3 (January 1994).
- 4 Crawford, Robert. *Identifying Poets* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh: University Press, 1993).
- 5 For example: Murray, Isobel & Tait, Bob. *Ten Modern Scottish Novels* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1984); Bold, Alan. *George Mackay Brown* (Edinburgh: Edimburgh University Press, 1978); Gifford, Douglas. "Scottish Fiction since 1945", *Scottish Writing and Writers* (ed. Wilson, Norman) (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1977), pp.11-28 (reprinted in *Studies in Scottish Literature XIII*, 1978: 250-273; Robb, David S.: "Greenvoe: A Poet's Novel", *Scottish Literary Journal*, 19 (1992): 47-60.
- 6 Crawford, 1993: 6-7.
- 7 Murray and Tait, 1984: 9.
- 8 *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (ed. and transl. C. Emerson) (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984); "Discourse in the Novel" (in *The Dialogic*

*Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist transl. M. Holquist and C. Emerson, Austin, Texas: 1981); *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (ed. C. Emerson and M. Holquist, transl. Vern W. McGee, Austin, Texas: 1986).

- 9 "Discourse in the Novel": 271-72.
- 10 *ibid*: 291-92.
- 11 *ibid*: 333.
- 12 Gary Morson and Caryl Emerson. *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics*. Stanford, 1990: 3.
- 13 For example, the two instances on p.13: "(The islanders could never understand why the gentry spoke in such heroic voices - their own speech was slow and wandering, like water lapping among stones.)" and "(Their own greeting, even after a decade of absence, was a murmur and a dropping of eyes.)"
- 14 *Greenvoe*: 7.
- 15 "Discourse in the Novel": 313.
- 16 *op cit.*: 165-6.
- 17 *Greenvoe*: 201-7.
- 18 "Discourse in the Novel" : 366.
- 19 Morson and Emerson: 310-11.
- 20 T.S Eliot. *The Waste Land* ll. 100-4: "yet there the nightingale/ Filled all the desert with inviolable voice/ And still she cried, and still the world pursues,/ 'Jug Jug' to dirty ears."
- 21 Pam Morris (ed.). *A Bakhtin Reader* (London 1994), p. 251.
- 22 *op cit.*: 312.

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