



## The Voices towards Identity: Heteroglossia and Polyphony in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Things We Left Unsaid*

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### Abstract

The present study attempts to read Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and Zoya Pirzad's *Turn off the Lights*, which is translated into English under the title of *Things We Left Unsaid*, in terms of the Bakhtinian theory of voice. This paper carries out a comparative study of these novels in order to specify the differences between the voices existing in the novels written by two women writers from two different cultures. For that purpose Bakhtin's conceptualizations and theories on Heteroglossia and Polyphony are focused upon. Although these two novels have been analyzed by variety of frameworks related to different critics, the study on the characters identity in the light of Bakhtinian theoretical concepts seems new and the comparativeness side of the research adds to the importance of the present work. By comparing these two works, some cultural differences and similarities regarding both women writers are being revealed. It seems that the authorial intentions towards the role of the characters stem from the similar viewpoints although they have been created in different social and cultural discourses. In the novels written by two writers, the process of identity creation of each character which is the product of various existing voices that are linked to one another through the social nature of language, is examined and observed in the light of Bakhtinian theory.

### Keywords

Heteroglossia; Polyphonic; Cultural Discourses; Bakhtin; Identity

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## 1. Introduction

The present paper aims to read Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and Zoya Pirzad's *Things We Left Unsaid* in terms of Bakhtin's heteroglossia and Polyphony, which the former means "differentiated speech", not simply the variety of different languages which occur in everyday life but also their entry into literary texts. This paper conducts a comparative study of these two novels in order to specify the differences between the voices existing in the novels written by two women writers from two different cultures.

Although different forms of literature can be regarded as a depiction of linguistic style and meaning, for Bakhtin, novels have the priority over all other literary genres. As described by Bakhtin, a work of poetry, usually offers a single language and style throughout, but "the novel as a whole is a phenomenon multiform in style and variform in speech and voice" (Bakhtin 261). A variety of distinct experiences are set as an organic entity. The distinctive feature of the novel lies in its ability to contain different related units as a whole. The novel challenges the common Aristotelian concepts such as single narrative, single construction and monologue. "It also frustrates the reader's expectation of a well-made plot and forces him/her to perceive the plurality in space rather than consecutiveness in time" (Mardan 205). As Mikhail Bakhtin proposes:

The novel orchestrates all its themes, the totality of the world of objects and ideas depicted and expressed in it, by means of the social diversity of speech types and by the differing individual voices that flourish under such conditions. Authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters are merely those fundamental compositional unities with whose help heteroglossia can enter the novel; each of them permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships. These distinctive links and interrelationships between utterances and languages, this movement of the theme through different languages and speech types, its dispersion into the rivulets and droplets of social heteroglossia, it is dialogization –this is the basic distinguishing feature of the stylistics of the novel. (Bakhtin 263)

A heteroglot novel is the one in which "the social and historical voices populating language, all its words and all its forms, which provide language with all its concrete conceptualizations, are organized in the novel into a structured stylistic system that



expresses the differentiated socio-ideological position of the author amid heteroglossia of his epoch” (300).

In Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* and Zoya Pirzad’s *Things We Left Unsaid*, there is a perceptible framework in which it is possible to observe different perspectives, multiple complex interrelationships and voices rather than a self-sufficient and closed authorial monologue. Zoya Pirzad and Virginia Woolf’s novels, have characteristics of heteroglot novel in common which the authors will also be able to hear their own sound together with heteroglot voices intersecting each other in a variety of ways and leading to dialogism as opposed to the monologue in the traditional stylistics of the novel.

As Beja (1985) has stated, Woolf is considered as “one of the great figures of “the modern novel” (1). Her works has been emphasized by critics due to its newness in the world of arts, By using “stream of consciousness, her dissolution of traditional limits of plot and character, her attention to minutiae of the mind and to apparently insignificant details of the external world, her pulverization of experience into a multitude of fragmentary particles, each without apparent connection to the others, and dissolution of the usual boundaries between mind and world” (53). Such peculiarities connect Woolf’s work to the works of her modernist contemporaries like James Joyce and Joseph Conrad (53). According to Beja, “Woolf is an excellent critic, an extremely conscious and brilliant craftsman in prose; she is intensely interested in the technique of fiction; and one has at times wondered, so vividly from her prose has arisen a kind of self-consciousness of adroitness” (1985: 16). “In the 1970s and 1980s, Woolf studies expanded in a number of directions, most notably in relation to feminism” (Goldman 130).

Zoya Pirzad is a famous Iranian-Armenian writer and novelist. She has written many works including two novels and three collections of short stories. One of Zoya Pirzad’s novels is *Cheraq-ha ra man khamush mikonam* (henceforth *Things We Left Unsaid*) which changed the feminist literary scene of Iran when it was first published in 2001 (Taheri 5). According to Goodarzi-nezhad (2010), in the first year of its publication it had reached its thirteen publications which had ranked as the international best-selling novel (156). It consists of 50 chapters which has been awarded multiple prizes including the prestigious Houshang Golshiri award for Best



Novel of the Year (*TWLU*). The novel has been translated into several languages, including English, under the title of *Things We Left Unsaid. I Turn off the Lights* gives a new voice to the women in Iran. In this novel, one of the striking aspects of contemporary women's writing in Iran which is the representation of domesticity is seen. It draws the reader's attention to how Pirzad construct a valuable novel from insignificant matters which happen in private lives of a family (Baktash 332). The novel also focuses on human relationships and the negative effects of lack of affection in the family. Due to the fact that some traces of feminism exist in this novel, it would be effective to analyze its language. (Najafi-Arab 183)

This paper addresses Mikhail M. Bakhtin's concepts of *heteroglossia* and *polyphony* to carry out a comparative study of Zoya Pirzad's *Things We Left Unsaid* and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. Bakhtin believes that the novel's popularity grew in literature because of its evolving capacity to reflect the multiple voices, words, and utterances from history, literature, colloquial environments, various economic classes, etc., within a dialogic sphere. He calls this variety of non-unifiable voices and voices that carry their own histories heteroglossia (O'Brien 9). According to Bakhtin, "Heteroglossia, once incorporated into the novel (whatever the forms for its incorporation), is another's language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way. Such speech constitutes a special type of double-voiced discourse..." (Bakhtin 324). This paper would pursue the similarities and differences between the authorial intentions, discursively formation of the main characters by the Double-voiced discourses and the way the different social activities and roles stands in the identity development spectrum.

By comparing the novels of Pirzad and Woolf, this paper aims to grasp the temporally and culturally distant or similar speculations of the novels on the society they grow out of. The hypothesis is that the authorial intentions towards the role of the characters stems from the similar viewpoints although they have been created in different social discourses. The shaping, and the development in identity is observable to a reader as a result of Bakhtinian analyses.

Through identifying each novel's voices and then comparing them, some cultural differences and similarities are being cleared, the features that seem important because of the fact that they have been written by two modern women novelists from



different cultures who were popular contemporary novelists of the world too. Bakhtin's ideas about heteroglossia and polyphony are important to the analysis of *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Things We Left Unsaid* in this paper because they contribute to aspects of ideology and, in turn, to formation of identity.

## 2. Methodology and Design

The present research is a qualitative study based on the library and online sources. By applying together heteroglossia and polyphony, the paper studies the various existed voices in different discourses to see the process of character's identities formation. The approach requires a close analysis of different voices which participate in the dialogue. This includes the identification of the main characters which is ultimately the product of various voices that are linked to one another through the social nature of language. In Pirzad's novel, there are different voices influential in the identity development process of Clarice from her childhood to the adulthood and also Mrs. Simonian. Emile and Artoush's identity formation can be seen as two complement voices of the process of identity formation of a man. In Woolf's novel and its characters, the same points can be also viewed. The novel illustrates how Clarissa's identity is created through heteroglossic context full of voices which disrupts the authority of the author's single voice.

In Bakhtin's view, heteroglossia refers to different stratifications or layers of language including language of different social groups, professional jargons, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups, languages of the authorities, language which belongs to the specific socio-political groups, etc. Moreover, various languages of heteroglossia have a kind of mutual relationship with each other which is completely dialogic. It also refers to different voices which exist in the novel. It is elaborated by Bakhtin that each language of heteroglossia is specific worldview, opinion, and ideology on the world which has its own purpose and meaning.

Philosophy of language is concentrated on dialogue, voice and otherness. Dialogue is not only verbal exchange between people, but it is the main factor of inter-relations between self and other. Thus, the whole life is dialogic and through its dialogicality our existence is created and the meaning always is in process of formation and creation due to the dialogic nature of language. On the other hand, polyphony is the notion which points to an autonomy and independence of characters



voices. In the novel each voice has its own right, independence and freedom. The character's voices are heard along with the author's voice. These voices speak with each other and they can be agree or disagree with author's voice. His ideas and opinions are spread among characters, from which the readers are able to achieve true meaning of the events. Thus, all the voices in the novel are heard in equal terms and no voice has domination on the other voices.

It is contended that self-creation relies on the considering the other, and the dialogical relationships between self and other. Without the presence of other, there is no self. Our self is created by putting ourselves outside the others and by co-operation and conflict with others. Thus, identity formation depends on the relation between self and other, and one becomes aware of herself through showing herself to another. To elaborate further, Bakhtin's novelistic discourse is the same as woman's writing, in both of them there is plurality of voices. Thus, in the works of women writers including Woolf and Pirzad, Bakhtin's notions of heteroglossia and polyphony can be traced. These writer's works are similar to the works of those feminists who have seized the force of language and dialogized it, which try to show their experiences through language. They want to create identity and a kind of self-awareness through their writing in order to break patriarchal way of writing.

### 3. Literature Review

A relatively large number of studies has been conducted on different aspects of these two novels and they have been analyzed by a variety of frameworks related to different critics which some are briefly noted as follows. Although some researches have relied on the analysis of the character's voices from the Bakhtinian viewpoint, the study on the character's identity under the concept of heteroglossia seems new and the comparativeness side of the research adds to the importance of the present work. Thus, the novelty of this study is the matter of its comparativeness.

In her paper, Linda M. Park-Fuller has applied Bakhtin's dialogic theory in an examination of Tillie Olsen's novel, *Yonnondio: From the Thirties*. The study was focused on the texture of voices in Olsen's novel which provides rich examples illustrative of Bakhtin's concepts of heteroglossia and polyphony and addressed the complexity of the novel's narrative voice and the layers of voices and languages embedded within that voice" (Park-Fuller 1).



In her investigation, Fateme Akbari et al., (2015) has tried to apply the Bakhtinian concept of heteroglossia in Pirzad's novel *Things We Left Unsaid* in the light of Feministic criticism and they have resulted that the feminine identity of characters are manifested through a double voice controversy of the author and the narrator.

In another study, Madran has focused on the heteroglossia, polyphony and dialogism in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* in the light of Bakhtinian critical theory. The findings show that, in spite of characteristics of gothic and romance, *Wuthering Heights* is the incorporation of the various genres and with different voices belonging to different characters, it is a heteroglot, polyphonic and dialogic novel (Mardan 204).

Ann Diefendorf O'Brien has discussed how identity evolves within particular ideological settings and how it is influenced by one's material, day-to-day circumstances and personal relationships in Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours*. The paper concludes that a Bakhtinian critique to these novels illuminates the creation, sustainment and potential for change in individual identity, or in Bakhtin's words, -consciousness becoming. (O'Brien ii).

Salimi Kuchi and Shafii have conducted a comparative study on *Things We Left Unsaid* by Zoya Pirzad and *Banned Booklet (The Secret Diary)* by Alba Deses Pedes according to the theory of Gynesis in Women writing. These two novels formed in two different geographical and cultural origins. They aimed to answer the question of how the common characteristics of feminine writing engender fundamental similarities in plot, narrative and characterization. They concluded that, the characteristics and common factors in both texts and meta-texts of these two feminine writings produced a realistic and measured image of "women situation" in these two societies, Iran and Italy.

In a stylistic study by Nikoubakht et al., the most significant stylistic aspects of Pirzad's writings were studied through a feminist stylistic approach. They concluded that from the first work of the author to the last work, a feminist point of view has emerged at different levels of the texts, e.g. lexicon, sentence, and discourse. The changing trend of thought which leads to linguistic transformation and development in the *Things We Left Unsaid* is that the women status is challenged, and due to the role of women in social activities, a different description of female identity as the agent of change is presented.



## 4. Analysis and Discussion

### 4.1. Representation of Identity in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Things We Left Unsaid*

Bakhtin's model of self-formation depends on dialogues between different voices and ways of speaking which transfer various worldviews. The self is constructed by knowing the positions of the other and distance between self and other. As it is stated that:

*I am conscious of myself and become myself only while revealing myself for another, through another, and with the help of another. The most important acts constituting self-consciousness are determined by a relationship toward another consciousness, (towards a thou). Separation, dissociation, and enclosure within the self as the main reason for the loss of one's self. Not that which takes place within, but that which takes place on the boundary between one's own and someone else's consciousness, on the threshold. (Bakhtin qtd. in McCallum 71)*

For Bakhtin selfhood is made as a result of the dialogicality of human beings who form each other's identities. In this sense, dialogical processes of addressing and responding to, and "the ability to position oneself in relation to the other, within a context of juxtaposition of ideas and clash of meanings" leads to formation of self and identity (Renedo, 12.5). It is also mentioned by Bakhtin that our perception of our world and making sense of ourselves depends on the worlds of others. Thus, the self is developed in through a clash with other's world, and judging it. (Renedo 12.10)

Moreover, "the person can only make sense of herself and emerge as an ontological human being through identifying herself through the other and in co-operation and conflict with the other" (Bakhtin qtd. in Renedo 12.11). In addition to what is mentioned, Bakhtin argues that as a result of considering possible other by means of language and social interrelations our subjectivity and consciousness is created which does not have anything to do with independent unconscious (McCallum 70-71). For Bakhtin, the philosophy of language is concentrated on dialogue, voice and otherness and the whole life is dialogic and through its dialogicality our existence is created. On the other hand, polyphony is the notion which points to an autonomy and independence of characters voices. Moreover, it is discussed that self-creation relies on the considering the other, and the dialogical relationships between self and other. Without the presence of other, there is no self. Our self is created by putting ourselves outside the others and by co-operation and





conflict with others. Therefore, identity formation depends on the relation between self and other, and one becomes aware of herself through showing herself to another.

Virginia Woolf is among those authors who posit that the way of writing differs between man and woman and it is not the same. She states that she should write like a woman. Consequently, by means of language she tries to show the characteristics of female sex, and the deepest regions of woman's experiences. Due to the fact that, females are considered as an inferior object in the works which is written by men, women attempt to create their way of writing in order to break the limitations which have been imposed on them throughout the history. It is also mentioned that Zoya Pirzad is among those Iranian writers that one can feel the simplicity of her works very easily. In her novel, woman's experiences and perspectives along with her conflicting internal feelings are shown through the simple feminine atmosphere. Pirzad shows the woman's situation in patriarchal society by using realistic style. Furthermore, due to the plurality of voices and diversity of worldviews and ideologies this work is considered as heteroglossic novel.

Woman's writing is in contrast to man's writing, in the sense that in female writing there is diversity of voices. Each voice represents different ideology and point of view. There are different meanings, interpretations; however, man's way of writing is monological and unitary. It listens only to man's voice through language. It is stated that woman's writing is the writing of becoming which changes constantly. Moreover, the narrative of Woolf has been regarded as feminine discourse which has disrupted the conventional course of narration. She uses stream of consciousness technique which is a clear example of multi-voicedness. Her way of narration is similar to Bakhtin's idea about novel, language, and other related concepts such as heteroglossia and polyphony. (Jing-yun huang 31)

Likewise, culturally speaking, Pirzad's work has been created in a cultural context where Iranian female writers did not experience a long history of literary production prior to the middle of 1370s Persian date (the 1990s AD). The history of literature both classical and modern was completely male dominated (Saeidian et al. 60). "In patriarchal culture, woman is already excluded from the dominant society, and her selfhood is defined by the culture as indefinable, unrepresentative and "other-wise" (Herndl qtd. in Minxian 12). Although grown up in a male-dominated society, Zoya



Pirzad's novels mainly dealt with women and their social problems. Her novels show how individual's life effects on identity's creation especially in the case of women. She strongly concentrates on the "exploration of female mentality and psychological examination of female identity in different social groups". She gathers together various generations of women with different social backgrounds (Haezi et al. 2-3).

To elaborate further, Bakhtin's novelistic discourse is the same as woman's writing, in both works there is plurality of voices. Thus, in the works of women writers including Woolf and Pirzad, Bakhtin's notions of heteroglossia and polyphony can be traced. These writer's works are similar to the works of those feminists who have seized the force of language and dialogized it, which try to show their experiences through language. They want to create identity and a kind of self-awareness through their writing in order to break patriarchal way of writing.

#### 4.2. Heteroglossia in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Thing We Left Unsaid*

According to Bakhtin, language is diverse by its nature; he says that "language like the living concrete environment in which the consciousness of the verbal artist lives is never unitary" (Bakhtin 288). In the novel, "the dialogic nature of heteroglossia is revealed and actualized; languages become implicated in each other and mutually animate each other. All fundamental authorial intentions are orchestrated, refracted at different angles through the heteroglot languages available in a given era" (410).

Heteroglossia literally means different languages which draws attention to "the internal stratification of any single national language into social dialects, characteristic group behavior, professional jargons, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups" (262). The novel is special among other genres due to the fact that it is based on heteroglossia itself. "Heteroglossia is an a priori precondition of the novel as a genre" (Brandist 115). In Bakhtinian terms, language not only stratified into "linguistic dialects in the strict sense of the word", but also it stratified into socio-ideological languages: languages of social groups, 'professional' languages, 'generic' languages, languages of generations and so on. (271-272). So, two novels in this research, Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and Zoya Pirzad's *Things we left unsaid*, are heteroglossics in which the voices of characters weave together throughout a single day. According to Bakhtin each voice represents one viewpoint (291).



In the essay entitled “*Mrs. Dalloway: Themes and Stream of Consciousness*” it is argued that the novel focuses on the life of two main characters, Mrs. Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith, whose voices are interrupted by the voices of other characters. The story begins with the voice or perspective of Clarissa, and then Peter Walsh enters the story through the Clarissa’s thinking on him when she is sitting at the window. The next character which is introduced is Hugh Whitbred. Clarissa and Whitbred have been familiar with each other since childhood. Then, Richard, Clarissa’s husband is introduced, after that, other characters enter such as Septimus ... (Dahiya 724-725). The characters in *Mrs. Dalloway* enter the novel one by one with their own voice. In addition to what is mentioned in prior lines, Carey (1969) has said that in *Mrs. Dalloway* the characters are introduced to us in fragments. It means that, the reader for example becomes familiar with Clarissa’s character little by little through broken parts, Richard is also introduced to us by different characters, Peter Walsh tells us a few thing about him, or Clarissa gives some information about him and ... (*Cliffs Notes* 39).

On the other hand, in her novel *Things We Left Unsaid*, Pirzad employs the first person narrator concentrating on the life of the main character of the novel, Clarice. Using this way for narrating the story, makes Clarice able to talk about her emotions and experiences directly. In fact, Pirzad by choosing the female protagonist and first person points of view creates a feminine world in the novel and helps the reader to access this world directly (Najar Homayon Far 394). This way of narration helps Pirzad to convey the ideas, perspectives, opinions, wishes of all the characters to the reader (Goodarzi-Nezhad 162). For further elaboration on this matter, following example is provided: “As the front door opened, I wiped my hands on my apron and called out, ‘School uniforms, off; hands and faces, washed! ... when I saw that there were four people standing in the kitchen doorway” (Pirzad 1). Clarice who is in her thirties lives in Abadan with her husband, Artoush, and her three children. Her husband works for the national oil company. Clarice’s mother and her sister regularly go to her house without invitation. (Taheri 5-6)

In both works, several voices are interwoven together and through the portrayal of the thought process of various characters the picture of life presents to us and the reader becomes familiar with different characters and their ideas. Throughout the



novels, heteroglossic interchange passing from character to character, voice to voice as it is shown in the novels. In Woolf's narrative, when Clarrisa arrives at home, her servant, Lucy, tells her that Mr. Richard goes out to take lunch with lady Burton. As a result, she gets sad because she was not invited. Then, Peter Walsh comes to her house. They have a long conversation with each other, they remember their past. When Peter goes out, Clarrisa reminds him of her party. After that the reader's attention is paid to Septimus Smith and Lucrezia who are speaking together. At first he seems quite normal but suddenly he hears the voices of the dead. At the same time the voices of Dr. Holms who is coming to see Mr. Smith is heard down stairs. In other parts of the novel Clarissa is busy with her party. She sees her old friend "Sally" at the party and gets surprised. Mrs. Bradshaw who informs Clarissa about the death of Septimus is there in the party. Clarissa gets unhappy by hearing this news and goes to her room in order to be alone. Then Peter and Sally are talking together.

The voices of Clarissa is shown through her memories, much of the novel is devoted to her remembrance of past events and those characters who were closest to her. She contemplates over her decisions "based on these memories and alternative imagined futures" (Perry 17). The opening section of the novel suggests this:

Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself for Lucy had her work cut out for her. The doors would be taken of their hinges; Rumpelmayer's men were coming. And then, thought Clarissa Dalloway, what a morning - fresh as if issued to children on a beach. What a lark! What a plunge! For so it had always seemed to her when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air [...]. (Woolf 3)

In *Mrs. Dalloway* the voice and thought of one character emerges suddenly in the middle of other character's consciousness. This shifting can be seen in many pages of the novel such as the following part:

But he himself remained high on his rock, like a drowned sailor on a rock. I leant over the edge of the boat and fell down, he thought. I went under the sea. I have been dead, and yet am now alive, but let me rest still; he begged (*he was talking to himself again—it was awful, awful!*); and as, before waking, the voices of birds and the sound of wheels chime and chatter in a queer harmony, grow louder and louder and the sleeper feels himself drawing to the shores of life, so he felt himself drawing towards life, the sun growing hotter, cries sounding louder, something tremendous about to happen. (56-57)



It shows the scene in which Septimus is sitting in the Regent's Park. These sentences are not what happen in the story during one day. But, the multiple voices of Septimus are heard due to his mental illness. It is the Septimus's imagination which is interrupted by another voice, (*he was talking to himself again—it was awful, awful!*); the voices changes from Septimus to Rezia and comes back to him again. So, two different viewpoints mingle together (Cui 9-11). So, the narrative moves in and out of consciousness of each character, Septimus suffers from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder who spends his day in the park and has hallucinations of his friend, Evan (Hanna 22).

The novel's points of transition between various consciousnesses also are made through the sound of a car backfiring, a sky-writing plane, the song of a flower seller and the striking of Big Ben. Heteroglossia is perceived in *Mrs. Dalloway* by using different word and phrases which sometimes are in contrast with each other. Idioms, colloquialisms and frequently cockney speech spread throughout the text: "for Lucy had her work cut out for her", "What a lark! What a plunge!" (Woolf 3). "In the swing, tramp, and trudge; in the bellow and the uproar; . . . in the triumph and the jingle" (4). As Bakhtin says, language is marked by history. It contains the social history and the experiences of prior years. (Dentith 47-48)

In different parts of the novel the characters including Clarissa and Septimus refer to Shakespeare *Cymbeline*. It appears that both Clarissa and Septimus are haunted by Shakespeare and love him. Character such as Septimus interests in literature and read Dante and Shakespeare, he wishes to write poetry too (Johnston 14). Moreover, when Woolf writes *Mrs. Dalloway*, she was interested in studying Shakespeare Sophocles, Euripedes, Proust, and Joyce. Thus, her familiarity with these authors influences the novel. "Fear no more the heat o' the sun/ Nor the furious winter's rages" are the lines which repeated during the day. These lines remain without any interpretation throughout the novel as they have remained without interpretation during history (O'Brien 48). It also refers to Bakhtin's idea that, "the novel permits the incorporation of various genres, both artistic (inserted short stories, lyrical songs, poems, dramatic scenes, etc.) and extra-artistic (everyday, rhetorical, scholarly religious genres and others)" (Bakhtin 320). In the novel, in addition to the repetition of some lines of *Cymbeline*, many of the characters are compared with birds,



including all the major characters such as Clarissa, Septimus and Peter. So, somehow the poetic language enter the novel, as it is mentioned that, “through his understanding of the bird’s sounds, Septimus is taking part in a meaningful discourse within the novel’s poetics, where birds can “call on” selves”. Some examples are given here for further elaboration on the matter: “Clarissa imagines her “ridiculous little face, beaked like a bird’s” (Woolf 9). She compares her deceased aunt with a bird (133). Septimus reminds Lucrezia of a “young hawk” (120) or “crow” (122). Septimus “could feel her mind, like a bird” (120). (Dvergsdal 56)

In other sections of the novel, references are made to religion, that is Christianity, which seems to add to the doubtful nature that exists within Mrs. Dalloway. Christianity has negative connotations in the novel which are represented through Mrs. Kilman and her “religious arrogance she displays through her petty and jealous nature”. “If only she could make her weep; could ruin her; humiliate her; bring her to her knees crying, You are right! But it was Gods will, not Mrs. Kilman’s. It was to be a religious victory. So she glared; so she glowed” (Woolf 102-3; Nodeland 46-7). Furthermore, Woolf’s techniques such as stream of consciousness, free indirect style and interior monologue in the novel make her novel heteroglossic.

Language of the novel *Things We Left Unsaid* is stratified which creates a heteroglot world of the novel. As Holquist indicates, “Heteroglossia is a way of conceiving the world as made up of a roiling mass of languages, each of which has its own distinct formal markers” (Holquist 67). These stratifications can be seen in different layers of novel. One of the ways through which heteroglossia enters the novel is through the domination of men in society which is manifested in man-made structure of language, as well as the voices can be heard in the narrative and dialogues. In Pirzad’s work, characters cannot express themselves through the language they use to communicate with the others; thus, they become “a muted group” (Dehghan & Khelghati 2018). Characters, in the way use the language and communicate with other characters are shown as muted so that they are, seemingly, disengaged by characters having power and louder voice. Although, and at the same time, they are empowered to find voices in order to challenge the dominant system of language. Therefore, the ultimate result of this challenge is withdrawal and manipulation, which are employed by the characters as the main strategies in the



relationship between men and women within the novel. In this novel, the muted group does not merely include women, and in some cases, the novel characters are not necessarily in a dominant or under domination position permanently. It seems that Pirzad's view to the muted group is beyond gender, and place of residence and class can be a basis for formation of these groups. In this novel, Pirzad has also considered empowered actions in muted groups which represents as heteroglossic.

#### 4.3. Manifestation of Polyphony in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Thing We Left Unsaid*

Bakhtin used the term polyphony in his writings which literally means "many-voiced". A polyphonic novel is "one in which several different voices or points of view interact on more or less equal terms" (Baldick 1999). According to Bakhtin, "A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels" (6). McCallum (1999) indicates that "multivoiced narratives use two or more character focalizers or narrators from whose perceptual and attitudinal viewpoints events are narrated" (23).

Accordingly, in Woolf's novel various point of views exist and these point of views change frequently within the text. It is said that "the essential characteristic of the technique represented by Virginia Woolf is that we are given not merely one person whose consciousness is rendered, but many persons, with frequent shift from one to another" (Auerbach qtd. in Cui 2). So, in this respect, many-voicedness also becomes the primary characteristic of *Mrs. Dalloway*. The novel is about the parallel experiences of two figures, Clarissa Dalloway, society hostess and politician's wife, and Septimus Warren Smith, a shell-shocked young war veteran. Woolf's narrative method shift between these two parallel (Goldman 54). Furthermore, the voices of other characters are represented in the novel simultaneously.

Another major feature of the polyphonic novel is its multi-leveledness which is created through the compatible and different worlds belonging to each character (Bakhtin 16-17). As it is stated by McCallum (1999) that multi-leveled narratives "comprise two or more interwoven or interconnected narrative strands through which events (or different versions of events) are narrated. These strands may be differentiated by shifts in narrative point of view (who speaks or focalizes) and/or by shifts in the spatial or temporal relationships (or what Bakhtin terms 'chronotopic')



relationships)” (23-4). So, the polyphonic novel includes multiple voices and multiple plot levels which are related to these voices. It is not a reflection of the single consciousness of its author or narrator. As it is seen in the novel, *Mrs. Dalloway’s* structure has double parallel narrative alongside other narratives through which a shift in point of view and perspective is created.

In the novel, the narrative shifts from Clarissa to a car outside the flower shop which is broken down. People gather together and each person says his/her idea on “who they think might be sitting behind the car’s curtain windows”. One of the passer-by refers to an airplane in the sky which is writing with smoke. So, the narrative changes to those people who guess what is being written. On the other hand, side-characters think about the war and its victims. The narrative also focuses on a bench in Regent’s park, when “Rezia Warren Smith cries to her husband Septimus that he must pay attention to the sky” (Hill 33). “This shifting of perspective allows Woolf to undercut the dominance of the narrator without replacing it by what she saw as the tyranny of the first-person monologue” (Snaith 138).

On the other hand, in *Things We Left Unsaid* each character merges with his/her own voice in the frame of narrator’s mind. They have their own independent voice and idea which is different from the voices of others (Akbari et al. 34). As it is cleared in the novel, the reader feels the presence of different characters with their own voices. In this respect, any person is free from others for example, it can be seen in the case of twins when they talk about Emily which is shown in the following part:

Emily used to go to school in Masjed-Soleiman.  
She’s been to school in London, too.  
She’s been to school in Caklutta, too.  
Armen broke out laughing. Not Caklutta, you dimwit.  
Calcatta. (Pirzad4)

The reader can thus hear the voices of different characters from the most important characters such as Clarice to the least important characters such as Ashkhen. All these languages are independent and different from each other. As an example, it can be referred to the voice of Ashkhen in the following part:

His job is to hang around the Kuwaiti Bazaar dawn to dusk, stroll up and down along the Shatt al-Arab, smoke two or three packs a day, and chomp on sunflower seeds.





He supposes his poor mother, namely me, can pluck money from the trees. (Pirzad 54)

Ojakianus stated that in the novel, the writer has a neutral view towards all characters and doesn't put one of them superior to the others (170). Thus, all these voices have equal rights. Moreover, there are several women whose identities and ideas differ from each other. Each of them has her own idea and belief system (Nikobakht 140). In this regard, the presence of various voices and ideas in the novel break the authority of single voice of the writer or narrator.

#### 4.2. The Idea of Choice in “Dialogized Heteroglossia”

Medvedev and Bakhtin (1978) claimed that our consciousness “can only become a consciousness by being realized in the forms of the ideological environment... in language, in conventionalized gesture, in artistic image, in myth and so on” (14). However, because of the contradictories, the ideological environment is in active dialectical process of generation, a process that Bakhtin (1981) called “dialogized heteroglossia” (272). On the other hand, some theorists have misappropriated Bakhtin's concept of “dialogized heteroglossia” to recommend that a logical choice among ideologies can be made.

Psychologically speaking, one can contend that consciousness is a kind of behavior that is controlled by the mind like any other performances. Human consciousness emerges on the interface between three components of animal behavior: communication, play, and the use of tools. In his article, Kotchoubey, (2012) discusses the personal control of one's actions or what we call it choice. In a brief description, he argues that:

Despite a century of serious critique this notion [choice] is still alive and leads us to ask the question of how the brain can know that my movements belong to me. As always, the answer is postulating an additional “module” of attribution of actions to the agent. Thus a cat's brain first makes a decision that she will jump for a mouse, and then, she needs an additional decision making that she (rather than another cat, or a fox, or a raven) will jump for the mouse. (9)

Focusing on the idea of agency, he argues that the basis of agency is the simple fact that predators, as a rule, do not attack their own body. This is the difference between “the inside” and “the outside” quite alike to the difference between the own and alien albumins in the immune system. However, as soon as we acknowledge that



consciousness develops from performance, we understand that this simple me/non-me difference is a precursor of human agency.

What makes this agency the fact of our conscious awareness is the choice. Most lay people simply identify autonomy with choice. Choice is the result of the fact that practically performed actions can differ from the actions overtly done. But when this difference exists, it proves that in the same situation at least two different actions were possible, and consequently, we had liberty of choice. In retrospection, we regard an action as intentional if we did, or could, estimate possible concerns of several alternatives and selected one whose virtual results were the best.

The first element of choice, as a basis for developing one's consciousness in Pirzad's novel, is firstly rejected by the boring and monotonous life depicted in *Things We Left Unsaid*. The protagonist's respond to the everyday routine life, which has become the title of the novel, *I Turn off the Lights*, rejects the presence of choice in shaping one's consciousness. As each night when protagonist's husband asks her wife to turn the light off, she responds: "Yes, I will turn off the lights." It is a sign of a well-worn routine. However, as Bakhtin's critics contend, the logical choice plays a vital role when it is considered and chosen among different voices and ideologies. The choice plays its part in shaping one's consciousness when different alternatives are available and ideology directs one's consciousness toward making a proper decision.

The idea of choice in *Things We Left Unsaid* emerges as the narrator and the protagonist of the novel avoids distancing form events that have been taking place in Iran, such as Iranian women's mobilization for equal rights. Although she is an Armenian, she cares about the events happening around her. What Muslim women is looking for does matter to her. On the other hand, Mrs. Nurelahi, Clarisse husband's secretary, participates in the commemoration of the Armenian massacre.

In this vein, the novel is heteroglot and shows a mixture of multiple worldviews based on choice. This idea is reflected when an Armenian woman is motivated to consider Muslim women's campaign for equal right and Muslim Iranian women is stimulated to take part in a ceremony conducted entirely in Armenian language. These signs of choice in making ones consciousness appear in a heteroglot and polyphonic work when raptures and differences undercut the possibility of reading



either the Armenian or the Muslim Iranian identities as static and monolithic. The jarring communication between Muslim and Armenian women in the novel by Pirzad and their feeling towards each other's concerns and issues demonstrate the role of choice as making one's consciousness, as well the highlighted presence of two or more expressed viewpoints known as heteroglossia.

Alternatively, Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* signify the same viewpoint regarding the idea of choice in making one's consciousness, as it is represented in terms of heteroglossia. Richard and Clarissa Dalloway embody the average traits of people on the social, cultural and economic level with which the author of the novel was most familiar. The role of choice in making one's consciousness appears when the reader knows about the differences between the couple in different terms; however, they still hang on together. The first difference is shown when middle-class passengers compare Dalloway's social position and Richard's success in life with Clarissa's fancy furs and jewels and find them incompatible. But, Dalloways make party on board and bring together different types of people whose encounter, joyous, boring or hateful are the substances of the respective heteroglot work of art in which different standpoints get together based on choice. This is certainly a conscious choice because Clarissa herself is not very educated and literate, though, bringing different types of people with various standpoints makes her free from complications of other people's theories and ideas about life and "its life that matters" as Woolf succinctly writes in her diary. (Woolf 72)

## 5. Findings

According to Bakhtin, due to the heteroglot nature of the novel various voices exist in the novel where each voice represents one idea and worldview or consciousness. It is argued that Woolf's way of narration in her novels is multi-voicedness which is the same as Bakhtin's idea on the heteroglot novel. In Woolf's novel, *Mrs. Dalloway*, heteroglossia is observed line by line, in which various voices are heard in it through a single day. The voices of different characters thus weave together, and they are emerged suddenly in the middle of each other. The narration shifts between different consciousnesses. This shifting is made through the sound of a car backfiring, a sky-writing plane, the song of a flower seller and the striking of Big Ben. Furthermore, because of heteroglossic nature of *Mrs. Dalloway*, different voices and words and



phrases including idioms, colloquialisms and mostly cockney speech spread throughout the text. These voices are sometimes in opposition to each other. In different pages of the novel it is referred to past history, as it is seen that some lines of *Cymbeline* by Shakespeare are repeated throughout the novel. On the other hand, there are many references to the Christianity and its negative connotations. Some parts of the novel include poetic language. Thus, different genre embedded in the novel. In addition to what is mentioned, Woolf's techniques such as stream of consciousness, free indirect style and interior monologue make her novel heteroglossic. Stream of consciousness as a madness discourse has been associated with feminine way of writing in which there is no trace of logic and consistency. The plot is not linear due to its various flashbacks and flash-forwards.

Apart from what is said previously, inserted genres are another ways for entering heteroglossia in the novel including poetry, religion/Christianity, history, proverbs. All these genres incorporated into novel which brings with themselves their own languages. So, all these factors effectuates the world of the novel be heteroglossic. As Bakhtin says, when heteroglossia enters the novel it creates double-voiced discourse in such a way that the intention of the writer scatters among different characters in a refracted way.

Pirzad's novels mainly focused on the mentality of female characters and their search for finding their inner meaning and identity. Among her novels, "*Things We Left Unsaid*" has characteristics of heteroglot novel that through which the identity creation of Clarice has been possible. In this novel the stratification of languages can be seen. According to Bakhtin, the novels world is heteroglossic due to its stratified languages. Each language stands for one idea or worldview. Therefore, when heteroglossia enters the text, it brings with itself its own ideology. The heteroglossic languages usually have tension with each other during the novel. Therefore, the novel reflects the languages of different social groups. The author uses these languages in order to achieve her purpose.

Heteroglossia enters the novel through various ways. One of them is language of different characters. Pirzad shows different characters with their own language. The selection of their languages depends on their age, culture, and gender. Each of these languages shows different ideas and opinion. In order to make the reader familiar



with the worldviews, ideas, and wishes of all characters, the reader chooses first person point of view as a way of narration. So, Pirzad by gathering various women enters their different perspectives in the novel. Thus, different voices mingled with each other such as the voices of Mrs. Nurollahi, Armineh, Nina, and other characters.

The voices of Clarice's mind are heard during the novel which are permanently challenging with each other. So, the novel is populated with various languages. Each of these languages brings their own worldviews and perspectives. According to Bakhtin, in the novelistic discourse languages are put in to dialogical relationship. This dialogical relation is in fact the dialogical relation between different ideas and perspectives. These dialogical relations are obviously depicted between characters especially in the case of Clarisse and her surroundings.

*Things We Left Unsaid*, with its many-voiced quality, is a polyphonic novel in which all the voices of the novel speaks on equal term without any superiority on each other. All these voices are independent and autonomous. The presence of different characters with their own perspectives and ideas is felt by the reader. Each of these characters has their own rights. Therefore, no dominance of single voice is felt in the novel. *Mrs. Dalloway* is considered as a polyphonic novel due to its many voices which exist in it. Each voice is independent and autonomous from other voice. In other words, each character in the novel has its own idea and opinion and is free from other character. The voices which exist in the novel do not have any superiority on each other. Each of them has its own right. The novel is thus opposed to those novels which have focused on the author's single voice.

## 6. Conclusion

Regarding inferiority of women in patriarchal societies, where positioned in marginalized situation, women writers use the novel's potentiality in order to express their experiences which are opposed to those of men. In this regard, both Woolf and Pirzad inspire women to write the novel from their point of view. Therefore, as a feminine discourse, the way of narration changes the conventional course of narration. On the other hand, the novel due to its heteroglot nature is the best genre for this purpose. The capacities of this genre enable them to write about their world which leads them to create the woman selfhood and identity. Through novelistic



discourse, the feminine writing shows its presence as a multi-voiced text which helps the women to show their inner world and marginalized voices.

Most of the female writers contend that men and women have dissimilar life experiences. As a result, their way of writing also differs. They state that women should talk about their life from their own points of view. In order to break the socio-cultural boundaries and limitations which is imposed on woman by the society which is widely male-dominated, women should have their own writings. It could be argued that Woolf in her novel radically seeks to break the traditional rules of writing novel because of its rejection of the single and omniscient narrator which is one of the major features of man-made literature. In contrast to monological world of novels, which are written by men (it is widely male-dominated), and even if there is something about women, it is men's opinions about them, Woolf's novel focuses on the life of an ordinary female protagonist and her experiences. With its double narration, with its incorporation of the various genres, and with its different voices belonging to different characters which make it one of the conspicuous examples of a heteroglot, polyphonic, and dialogic novel. *Mrs. Dalloway* is thus marked with most of the features of feminine writing practice.



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