

Heteroglossia in Richard Russo's *Empire Falls*: A Bakhtinian Exploration

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Abstract

Language is the carrier of human beings' ideas, and ideologies, and through language a character's inner thoughts can be revealed. Reading Dostoevsky's novels, Bakhtin discusses the polyphonic aspect of the novelistic language in what he terms heteroglossia, which has to do with the linguistic diversity a text embraces. This paper aims to examine Heteroglossia or the multiplicity of language or the "Languagedness" (Gardiner 97), in *Empire Falls* written by the American novelist Richard Russo and published in 2001. The novel is closely read and its heteroglossic content is identified and discussed in a way that sheds light on the sources of the Russo's novel, language, and narrative techniques of its author. Results emerge to prove the highly significant role of heteroglossia or multilingualism in the narrative construction of *Empire Falls* and the advancement of its themes and motifs.

Key words: Heteroglossia, Bakhtin, *Empire Falls*, Richard Russo .

التعددية اللغوية في رواية ريتشارد روسو " سقوط الامبراطورية": بحث باختيني

المستخلص

تكمن اهمية اللغة في انها الواسطة الانجح التي من خلالها يستطيع الانسان التعبير عن افكاره ومعتقداته وتوجهاته . اللغة كذلك هي الاداة التي نستطيع بها التعرف على شخصية الفرد ودوافعه وافكاره العميقة .

قدم المفكر الروسي ميخائيل باختين ومن خلال دراسته لادب وروايات الروائي الروسي ديستوفسكي مصطلح الرواية البوليفونية او الرواية متعددة الاصوات والتي من ابرز سماتها هي التعددية اللغوية في النص الروائي . تبحث الدراسة الحالية في اهمية التعددية اللغوية في الرواية وقد اختيرت رواية " سقوط الامبراطورية" للكاتب الامريكي ريتشارد روسو (٢٠٠١) لهذا الغرض .

ان من ابرز سمات الرواية البوليفونية التي قدمها المفكر الروسي باختين هي تعددية الاصوات , الحوارية , الكرنفالية وتعددية اللغة وهذه الاخيرة ستطرحها هذه الدراسة كركن اساسي من اركان الرواية البوليفونية من خلال تحليل اللغة التي تحاور بها شخصيات رواية "سقوط الامبراطورية" وكيفية اختلاف اللغة التي ينطق بها كل شخص حسب اختلاف طبيعة الفرد من ناحية ارثه الثقافي او مستوى ثقافته او البيئة التي يعيش بها. تتيح التعددية اللغوية في الرواية المعاصرة لنا فهم الواقع الذي يعيشه ابطال الرواية وايضا تكشف مدى تأثير الواقع الذي يعيشه الفرد على اللغة التي يستعملها كوسيلة للتعبير عن نفسه او وسيلة للاتصال مع الآخرين في مجتمعه .

الكلمات المفتاحية : التعددية اللغوية , باختيني , سقوط الامبراطورية , رواية ريتشارد روسو .

Introduction

Heteroglossia is considered as one of the most fundamental concept that Bakhtin introduced along with other concepts that relate to the linguistic diversity in the novel. In this study, a contemporary novel, Richard Russo's *Empire Falls* is examined from a Bakhtinian perspective so that light would be shed on any sign of linguistic pluralism contained in it. Furthermore, the study tries to show how contemporary life has its impact on the way the characters reveal their own personalities through their multilingual references.

Because heteroglossia is one of the main aspects that Bakhtin has pointed out in his delineation of the polyphonic novel, especially the ones written by Dostoevsky, the current study adheres to the characters of heteroglossia as outlined by Bakhtin. *Empire Falls* is expected to invest in heteroglossia or the multi-languagedness as one way of representing the contemporary world which has changed radically in the recent years under the influence of globalization, ideological conflicts, dislocation and migration. In the present study, heteroglossic references are identified, analyzed and interpreted against the diverse background of the works and multiplicity of reality. As such, any signs of linguistic diversity in the text are interpreted as manifestations of individualistic discourse that is designed to convey certain ideas and values.

Heteroglossia

Heteroglossia basically relates to linguistic pluralism and diversity. To define heteroglossia, Bakhtin suggested that it literally means the coexistence of different discourses or multiple languages in a specific language at a specific period of time which ultimately provides ways of recognizing and understanding the world. Michael Holquist in his book "*Dialogism*", stated that "Heteroglossia is a kind of situation and this situation [is] surrounded by many responses that individual

Heteroglossia in Richard Russo's Empire Falls:
A Bakhtinian Exploration

reacts in a specific point, but at the same time he/she will be framed in discourse that is chosen from thousands available discourses.” In many literary texts, heteroglossia is associated with the process of meaning which includes in this case the utterance itself (67).

Because heteroglossia is the recurrence of variety of languages in a certain text at a certain time, this multilingualism, so to speak, offers one way of shaping and understanding the world (Bakhtin *Dialogic Imagination* 261). The language in any literary work reflects what the writer aims to convey to readers and if the writer chooses to incorporate allusions to languages or linguistic variations within the main language in which the text is composed, then heteroglossia is activated. It is the writer's choice of words that makes a heteroglot of a certain text (nooruldin & Azeez 110), because “ Awriter or critic cannot encapsulate everything the novel encompasses ,” as it is a heteroglot world with multiple elements (Muhsin ,81).

Bakhtin discusses the novel as a literary genre that embraces a “diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of individual voices that are organized in an artistic way” (*The Dialogic Imagination* 261). He emphasizes that the investigator of the novel as a “phenomenon” has to confront a variety of styles and speech voices, hence heteroglossia. Bakhtin provides the basic voice types or what he refers to as “compositional stylistic unities” into which the novelistic whole breaks down and hence heteroglossia is realized:

1. Direct authorial literary – artistic narration in all its diverse variants
2. Stylization of various forms of oral everyday narration (skaz).
3. Stylization of various forms of semiliterary (written) everyday narration (the letter, the diary, etc.)
4. Various forms of literary and extra artistic authorial speech (moral, philosophical, or scientific statement, oratory ,ethnographic ,description memoranda and so forth).

Heteroglossia in Richard Russo's Empire Falls:
A Bakhtinian Exploration

5. The stylistically individualized speech of characters. (*The Dialogic Imagination* 262).

These “heterogenous stylistic unities” collaborate with each other within the narrative zone forming an artistic system, which will contribute to “the higher stylistic unity of the literary work as a whole.” This newly formed structure, however, will be totally different from the unities that are “subordinated” to it. In the light of this combination of unities, the novel becomes home for linguistic pluralism. Consequently, the incorporation of such unities and styles into the novel will neither damage its narrative structure nor harm its linguistic unity (*The Dialogic Imagination* 262). Heteroglossia becomes a subject to some artistic reworking when it enters the novel. The language of the novel is expressed in social and historical voices and in words and forms that give the language its particular concrete conceptualization. The aforementioned voices organize themselves into “a structured stylistic system” that sets the authors’ “socio-ideological” positions apart from, for instance, the heteroglossia of their eras (*The Dialogic Imagination* 300).

Heteroglossia is investigated in several disciplines including philosophy of language, stylistics and linguistics which propose a kind of awareness of how speakers/ writers employ language to their advantage. Bakhtin recognizes two poles in the life of language, which are the “unitary” language and the “individual” language and between these two poles, there exist all linguistic phenomena (*The Dialogic Imagination* 300). Bakhtin asserts that there are as well two forces, centrifugal and centripetal, that control the utterance of a speaking subject. In other words, “the process of centralization and decentralization, of unification and disunification all intersect in the utterance”. The unitary language with its centripetal forces and tendencies participates in the social and historical heteroglossia while the centrifugal, stratifying forces include all kinds of utterances. This argument is exemplified in the momentary language of a day at a certain time or the language of a social group, a genre, a school, ... etc. As a

Heteroglossia in Richard Russo's Empire Falls:
A Bakhtinian Exploration

matter of fact, any utterance that is contradiction-ridden, tension-filled and embattled between two tendencies can lend itself to a detailed and concrete analysis (*The Dialogic Imagination* 272).

In his essay “The Problem of Speech Genre”, Bakhtin states that the novel as a written discourse is a kind of utterance, but it is a “special kind of utterance” in that it is a “secondary utterance” (Toorn 97). Bakhtin adds that when the novelists incorporate in their novels a “primary” utterance written in the dialect of a particular character in the novel, they try to locate these utterances within the territory of the “secondary utterance” or the novel. Writing a novel, the author attempts to “annex and appropriate” primary utterances to ultimately produce the heteroglossic text, which is “many-tongued” and “stylistically heterogeneous” in that it is a “mosaic of voice-zones” (Toorn 97). Furthermore, and because the primary utterances are important parts of the linguistic diversity and resonate with the multi-voicedness, they are heteroglotic and polyphonic. In any utterance the basic conditions “governing the operation of meaning are the heteroglossia or (other –language) and polyphony (many-voicedness)”. In this regard, Bakhtin indicates that “heteroglossia is the ideological inherent in various languages to which” all humans “lay claim” by virtue of being social creatures (Park-Fuller 2). This “other-language” or heteroglossia individuates speakers as it appears in the speech of each one. Park-Fuller adds that “the inherent ideologies of our profession, the language and inherent ideologies of our age group, of the decade, of our social class, geographical region, family, circle of friends ... etc” impact “our” linguistic output (2).

Bakhtin says that the novel has been always a “forum for heteroglossia” where “a multitude of voices” and “patterning diversity” find their way into its fabric. In addition, he considers the novel as an area of the “compositional unities “that allow heteroglossia to show up in the structured form of the world” (Matz 59). Moreover, if different values, arguments and cultures struggle with each

Heteroglossia in Richard Russo's Empire Falls:
A Bakhtinian Exploration

other in the novel and if there was a variety of linguistic styles in the speech community of the novel, heteroglossia is apt to occur.

Language is one of the most substantial element upon which the theory of knowledge is based and without language , knowledge loses its most central components (Sherwan , ٤٠). Heteroglossia or multiplicity of languages is a way that enables the novelists to examine the different kinds of knowledge. The novelist can examine social arrangements and they also test the ability of the novel to expose the different cultural factors through language. The linguistic diversity becomes an essential part of the “collective social life” in the novel. Heteroglossia exposes the plurality of the linguistic content and proves that the language shared by people of the same nation and culture is a far cry from homogeneity (Matz 60).

Empire Falls: An Overview

Empire Falls (2001) was the fifth among ten novels published by the American novelist Richard Russo . It won him the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 2002. Following its huge success, *Empire Falls* was adapted in 2005 for the small screen by HBO and the miniseries based on it was nominated for many prizes and it won two *Golden Globe* awards (Drowne 34). Russo’s authentic novelistic skill enabled him to project major issues that small towns confront, onto his fiction. In her book *Understanding Richard Russo*, Katheleen Drowne opines that Russo “understands intimately the frustration and joys of life in a closed-knit, dead-end community” (1); and this kind of understanding is responsible for the sympathetic tone with which he portrays his characters in *Empire Falls*. Richard Russo’s mother, like Grace Roby in the novel, wanted her son to leave Gloversville in search of better opportunities, a matter that gives a personal touch to the narrative. And thus, the novel is about Miles’s failure to leave his town and have a better life somewhere else.

Heteroglossia in Richard Russo's Empire Falls:
A Bakhtinian Exploration

Furthermore, Russo explained to Marica Franklin, who interviewed him for her TV show *Dialogue*, why most of his fiction is about small towns, saying that “what attracts me to small towns, really, is my interest in class and great thing about small towns”. In the same vein, Stacy Denton explains that Richard Russo highlights in a very effective way the “continuing relevance of working class rural places in the present U.S”. She further points to how Russo’s fiction gave a good perspective to places and people who are ignored most of the time (Denton 504).

Kathleen Drowne points out that critics find Russo’s affectionate depiction of the working class admirable in that he introduces them in his fiction as resourceful people who can handle the worst situations with generosity, good attitude and even humour. Russo does not only give a nod to the working classes in *Empire Falls*, but also criticizes the contemporary American lifestyle, capitalism and all outdated norms that the society holds onto tightly. To achieve that, Russo makes of the town of Empire Falls and its people a reference point to bring to surface the injustices inflicted on the American working classes. He is keen to prove that small towns are not less valuable than big cities and their working class citizens are indispensable to the American economic system (Denton 505).

Starting with a prologue and ending with an epilogue both written in italics, *Empire Falls* manifests its stylistic pluralism. Russo adopted this style of writing in italics to separate the chapters that contain character’s memories and flashbacks in the novel from those that report the immediate present lives of the same characters. Pendulum-like, chapters swing between the past and the present where characters try to figure out how to face their struggles and solve personal issues.

Miles Roby is the main character in the novel who has been living in the town of Empire Falls all his life. Miles finds himself working in a diner because he fails to obtain his university degree. The diner, namely Empire Grill, belongs

Heteroglossia in Richard Russo's Empire Falls:
A Bakhtinian Exploration

to the Whitings, a very wealthy family who literally owns the valuable half of the town. The Whitings once owned the town's factories for three generations, but has passed its heydays as all its male members are dead leaving Francine Whiting at the helm. A Whiting by marriage, Mrs. Whiting is a very dominant woman in her seventies obsessed with power and authority that come with money. Her husband C.B Whiting, shot himself in the head to put an end to his long suffering, leaving his only daughter, Cindy in the care of her cold-hearted mother.

When the novel opens, Miles is at a crossroads. Janine, his wife of twenty years, is divorcing him after he knew about her affair with Walt, the fitness club manager. His younger brother David who has his arm injured badly in a car crash is feeling restless because the Grill is too small for his expansion plans. Miles's daughter Christina or Tick is a teenager who has to deal with the mess left by the divorce of her parents and feels the need to find her own way amid this messy situation. Miles and David's relation with their good-for-nothing father Max has some Dostoevskyan vibes to it since Max, like Karamzov senior is solipsistic and self-indulging; he has sent his wife to an early grave and treated his sons with indifference. The other characters in the novel are Miles' friends, acquaintances and his business associates. For instance, Charlene, Miles's first love is a waitress at the Empire Grill; Otto Meyer is his classmate and the principal of Tick's school while Jimmy Minty is the corrupt policeman and Miles's archenemy.

Even though Miles is indisputably the hero of the novel, Russo protests that *Empire Falls* is not about Miles as an individual who is trapped by his economic needs. It is rather about Miles who is trapped by love and the repercussions that follow that love (Franklin 88). It was his love for his mother that led him back to the decaying town of Empire Falls, his unrequited love for Charlene that made him a slave at the Empire Grill and finally his love for his daughter Tick that he hangs onto up to the end. Further, Miles is highly influenced by religion and his catholic faith remains unshaken despite the ups and downs in his life. Therefore, it is not only the fall of the once prosperous industrial town that Russo highlights

Heteroglossia in Richard Russo's Empire Falls:
A Bakhtinian Exploration

in his novel, but also the deplorable state of faith in the contemporary western world. Drowne states that “Russo noted in a 2005 interview that the title is a complete sentence and is meant to describe ‘the various empires that we seem to be on the downside of in some way or another’” (Drowne ,106) . To emphasize the theme of fall and decay, Russo ends his novel in an expected episode of violence when John Voss, Tick’s troubled classmate, fires an old revolver, killing three people and injuring fatally a third while traumatizing Tick who witnesses the shooting and nearly loses her life if not for Otto Meyer.

Heteroglossia in Empire Falls

Richard Russo’s *Empire Falls* relies on numerous types of characters and each one has his/her own language that reflects their education, profession, class, age and personal views and beliefs. *Empire Falls* starts with a prologue which gives a brief account of the history of the Whiting ancestry. The Whiting family is the wealthiest and most powerful family in the town which they literally and metaphorically own and therefore Russo’s *Empire Falls* is about the fall of the Whitings. As the narrator in the prologue explores the past, he does not neglect that this town has about it some of its Spanish history which survives in the architectural style of the Whiting house. The Whitings built a hacienda-like mansion to be their home in Empire Falls. The word “hacienda” describes the sophistication of the mansion, but also indicates that Empire Falls belongs originally to the Spanish speaking part of the United States. Exploring the Whiting hacienda, Russo also uses the word “Patio” which is the paved inner courtyard in a Spanish house (merriam-webster.com/dictionary/patio). Albeit the Spanish name, the Whiting mansion is known for its “Georgian” architecture which is characterized by symmetry and the regularity of detail (<https://georgiangroup.org.uk/georgian-architecture/>).The house was so built to “inspire awe and loyalty,” and impress the immigrant workers, who came to find jobs, from Ireland, Italy, Poland and French Canada. Speaking of the latter, the French Canadian settlers in Empire Falls spoke French before English dominated

Heteroglossia in Richard Russo's Empire Falls:
A Bakhtinian Exploration

the linguistic map. The French language survives in religious contexts as it is apparent in the name of the Catholic church “Sacré Coeur” as “known to most of its French Canadian parishioners” and which literally translates to “Sacred Heart”. Of course, French is longer spoken or even understood by the vast majority of citizens in Empire Falls. Yet, Sacré Coeur still requires “a French-speaking pastor” (*Empire Falls* 52). Father Mark who is sadly monolingual has to leave Sacré Coeur and a French speaking priest such as Father Tibideaux takes over. Empire Falls was once multicultural and multi-linguistic even though the Spanish language and culture had the upper hand.

Along with the Whitings, the Roubideaux, which happens to be the name of a real American family, also settled in Empire Falls around the same time if not even earlier. By using the names of real places in Main and also a real family name, Russo gives his narrative a genuine sense of reality. While the Whitings had education and sophistication, the Roubideaux had neither. Francine Roubideaux who would be Mrs. Whiting after marrying Charles Whitings was the first in her family to attend Colby College, from which her husband C.B Whiting had also graduated as had his father and grandfather. Colby College, a well-ranked establishment in Waterville, Main, polished Francine’s character and language so that “she had emerged from Colby no longer recognizable as a Robideaux in deportment, speech or mannerism” (*Empire Falls* 14). As the name indicates, the Roubideaux family are themselves half-French, half-Canadian, this is why, C.B Whiting attributes Francine Rubidoux’s rather “pinched” look to her French Canadian ancestry (*Empire Falls* 14). Despite the varied backgrounds of its inhabitants, Empire Falls is an English speaking town and all its citizens, regardless of their roots and ancestry, all spoke American English. Therefore, the novel is composed entirely in English except for sporadic use of a foreign word (Spanish or French) here and there in justified contexts. For instance, in order to help business pick up, David introduces a few “ethnic” recipes to the diner such as “Shrimp flautas”, the Friday-night Mexican special or “hoisin sauce”, a

Heteroglossia in Richard Russo's Empire Falls:
A Bakhtinian Exploration

Chinese dish. Even though some customers are railed by the latter because they mistake it for Japanese, the ethnic food soon finds favour among younger generations for whom World War II is a long-gone history (*Empire Falls* 210).

More significant to the analysis of heteroglossia in *Empire Falls* is a particular character's language, that is, the idiolect or more specifically the speech habits that are peculiar to a specific person. To begin with, Tick as a teenager represents the the new generation and the language of the future. Her own language differs from the one that Miles and his mates speak. While her father seems to be fond of detailed explanations, Tick is bored with long-winded eloquence of the older generations. Her linguistic reluctance takes on the form of single-expression replies or what her father calls "monosyllabic evasion". Out of his genuine concern, Miles showers Tick with questions about her day upon her arrival from school, which she all answers with no more than "Okay". Miles interprets the series of Tick's okays as a calculated way to dismiss his concerns and a plea to leave her alone. Miles can not help but suspect that like most of young people her age, Tick is probably incapable of expressing her feelings and emotions (*Empire Falls* 210). Next to "okay", Tick seems to be fond of the word "thing" as Miles observes that "Lately all her statements were preceded by variations on 'the thing', 'Here's the thing', 'That's the thing', or 'The thing is'" (*Empire Falls* 104). She is occasionally outspoken and not always to her advantage as she worries about what others think of her. For instance, Tick can not help but wonder if Mrs. Roderigue would look at her work and accuse her of "doing a smart- aleck painting" (*Empire Falls* 385). Tick herself has something to say about the way some of her friends speak. For instance, she notices that Candace Bruke, her art class friend, always uses one conversation starter which also shows her excitement. "Oh-my- God- Oh-my- God" mimicked by Tick is Candace's signature phrase and a reflection of her rather shallow and easily-impressed character. Candace greets Zack Minty, Tick's ex-boyfriend with one of her " Oh-my-God-Oh –My-God" before she proceeds to say , "he's so good

Heteroglossia in Richard Russo's Empire Falls:
A Bakhtinian Exploration

looking. How can you stand it? I mean, like he was yours and now he's not" (*Empire Falls* 40). Readers also learn about teenagers' lingo through Tick and Candace. For instance, "lower-track" kids like Candace "who can't learn grammar or solve math problems" are called "Bones". When Tick, "a high-track kid", enrolls in an art class which is usually joined by bones, Candace made sure she befriends her so as to boast of this friendship to her likes in the "Bone World" (*Empire Falls* 73). Being such an underachiever, Candace is referred to by her mother as "moron". Candace even mimicked her mother's speech as the latter employs the word "moron" in a variety of contexts such as "What's up, Moron?" or 'You learn anything in school today, Moron?' or 'Hey, Moron, you didn't walk off with my goddamn car keys again, did you?' (*Empire Falls* 74).

Heteroglossia in the novel is observed in the dialogues of adult characters and Miles Roby has a lot to say about other people's idiolects. He reminisces about his mother's "pet phrases" such as, "Right this instant", with which she once confronted Jimmy Minty's father who used violence against his wife, Grace's next door neighbour. Miles dislikes Jimmy from their school days and may have even thought him inferior to him. This inferiority is evidenced in Jimmy's language among several other aspects. Speaking to "ol' Miles", Jimmy confuses "sit" with "set": "Why don't you come around and set a minute? Sit, I mean. You were right. I always get that wrong. 'Sit' and 'set.' Old Lady Lampley used to mark it with her red pet" (*Empire Falls* 291). Jimmy is aware of the poor figure he cuts in front of Miles, a matter that doubles his resentment of the latter's attitude towards him. More on the linguistic plane is Miles's pondering over the etymology of "amicable" in reference to his divorce. Miles would not only attend his ex-wife's wedding, but would also dance with her. Aware of his awkward situation, Miles's consciousness escapes into a semantic analysis of "amicable", which, he repeats to himself "recalling his high school Latin", derives from "Amicus, meaning 'friend,' the second noun they'd declined (the first was agricola, 'farmer,' which Miles had found odd, as if it were being suggested that

Heteroglossia in Richard Russo's Empire Falls:
A Bakhtinian Exploration

in the normal course of events you'd have more use for the word 'farmer' than for 'friend')" (*Empire Falls* 359). In a related, but less serious vein, one of Miles's dialogues with Max, his father who always begs for money to go to Florida, takes an unexpected linguistic turn. Max boasts that tourists in Florida Keys mistake him for "a Conch", that is, a native of the coast. He soon asks "You know what a Conch is?", in answer to which, Miles banters "'Yeah. It's the local term for a bum who won't bathe, right? An old reprobate who wears food in his beard and goes around sponging off strangers'" (*Empire Falls* 108). Comically enough, Max asks for an explanation of the word "Idyllic", which Miles explains mockingly as "'It means not a Conch in sight,'..." (*Empire Falls* 109). On his part and to show that he has wisened up with age, Max tells his son that "A man doesn't get to be sempty without learning a thing or two, you know" (*Empire Falls* 205). "Sempty" is how Max pronounces seventy probably because the number "seventy" scares him and he would wish to escape thinking about his advanced age.

On another note, Miles dwells a lot on his dialogues with Mrs. Whiting who has a very controversial relation with him. She has a domineering personality, making full use of her power as the Grill's owner and the one who may choose (or not) to bequeath it to Miles. Mrs. Whiting's conversations with Miles are always patronizing with "my dear boy" repeated over and over again. This is the way Francine Whiting shows and asserts her power over Miles without sounding too authoritarian or tyrannical. She is the matriarchal boss who knows her underling inside out in the way only mothers know their sons. Miles even recycles some of her phrases such as "That's hilarious" which he soon would identify as "Mrs. Whiting's refrain" (*Empire Falls* 120). On her side, Mrs. Whiting comments on Miles's occasional "tone of moral superiority" which he got from his mother as she claims. Mrs. Whiting continues her criticism of Grace, saying "Frankly, it was the one tiresome, disagreeable trait in an otherwise charming woman. She couldn't bring herself to be openly critical, but she was

Heteroglossia in Richard Russo's Empire Falls:
A Bakhtinian Exploration

forever using that very same tone” (*Empire Falls* 171). Mrs Whiting’s condescending “dear boy” is counterbalanced by Walt Comeau’s “big boy” which seems at face value to be derisive. Given Walt’s shallow character, his “big boy” may have originated in sarcasm of Miles’s mental fortitude, but could also have been intended to express his genuine admiration of the way Miles handles the very delicate situation of Walt and Janine. Walt’s designation of Miles as “big boy” is neutralized by his calling Tick “Littabit!” in his abortive endeavour to enlist the girl’s affection when he should know that she has been irrevocably decided against him not to mention that she would not like being described as little. Tick finds every gesture of kindness on Walt’s part despicable and therefore she ignores him over and again. Arriving from school with her heavy backpack, David greets her with “You gonna be my helper today?” while Walt comments “Whatcha got in that pack, sweetie pie, Rocks?” Being Tick’s uncle, David is aware that she likes to be treated as an equal and an adult, and therefore he asks for her help. In contrast, the attempt of the clueless Walt (her mother’s fiancé) to be friendly backfires because of his insensitive and presuming character. Tick is determined not to treat him as a stepfather, yet he is bent on winning her affection! Walt has one more favourite phrase according to Janine who is slightly awed by her gradual discovery of her future husband’s flaws; she recalls his ““You know, a smart man might just ...” (*Empire Falls* 274) which Walt often resorts to when he needs to advance his business plans.

Relevant to heteroglossia, however, is David’s “gonna”, Walt’s “Whatcha” and “littabit” as well as later on Jimmy’s “outta shape” and Charlie Mayne’s “Gotcha” which are the nonstandard contractions of (going to), (what have you), (little bit), (out of shape) and (I have got you) respectively. They are indexical of colloquial English and the speedy flow of its oral variety which causes the elision of some sounds. While these contractions are not peculiar to American English as they occur in British, Australian and Canadian varieties of English, certain expressions and idioms are familiar only in American English and when looked

Heteroglossia in Richard Russo's Empire Falls:
A Bakhtinian Exploration

up in the dictionary, they are identified as North American. Such expressions as “throw someone for a loop” meaning (to surprise someone), “a doobie” (a cannabis cigarette), “to futz around” (to waste time), “to eighty-six someone” (to kick someone out of place), “kegger” (college gathering/party), “scofflaw” (a lawbreaker), “a rumble” (an outdated term according to Miles for a street fight), “tuckered out” (to be worn out), among dozens other examples. Several of other expressions are relevant to the American football or rugby as known to the rest of the world outside the States. *Empire Falls* features a match between Empire Falls and Fairhaven, a neighbouring town. Rugby lingo prevails as characters discuss and boast knowledge of the game with such expressions as “linebacker”, “quarterback”, “scrimmage”, “tackling”, not to mention long arguments relevant to the game. For instance, readers are once allowed to watch the the Empire Falls vs Fairhaven match through Janine’s knowledgeable eyes. Her descriptions and commentaries team with rugby lingo which requires a considerable familiarity with the game to understand. A few days before the game, Jimmy Minty proudly described his son’s position in the Empire Fall’s team, telling Mrs Whiting:

“He plays linebacker, Miss Whiting,” he explained, his hand still resting between her shoulder blades. “That’s on the defense. Which is why he’s setting over there on the bench just now. It’s his job to patrol the line of scrimmage. Make tackles on running plays. Rush the quarterback when he throws. (*Empire Falls* 262)

Comically enough, Jimmy who can not draw a line between “sit” and “set” explains like a professional his son’s role as a linebacker, peppering his explanation with expressions specific to American football.

In *Empire Falls*, Miles and Tick enjoy playing a different game that they together invented and which relies on puns and wordplay. The language game between daughter and father shows the strong bond between them is so expressed and reinforced to the point that even Janine is excluded from it. Janine does not find “Empire Moment”, which is the name Miles and Tick give to their game

Heteroglossia in Richard Russo's Empire Falls:
A Bakhtinian Exploration

funny even though she claims she understands it perfectly well. In spite of being Tick's mother, Janine thinks that this game makes her daughter feel superior to everyone else, which is something that Janine dislikes about Tick (*Empire Falls* 38). "Empire Moment" is based on finding funny gaffs in the ads on the pages of the *Empire Gazette*, road signs and billboards outside restaurants and shops which they reinterpret to elicit unintentional humour. Such signs include, for instance, the one on the wall of an empty shirt factory saying "NO TRESPASSING WITHOUT PERMISSION" or "the "flower shop. mixed B.O.K.A.Y" or when Tick notices an "Enter in rear" sign on the gate to a shabby rumored-to-be-gay-bar. Miles is sometimes even surprised by how smart his daughter is and proudly wonders if he would have picked on the humorous twist in a sign outside the Lamplighter saying "Their new special's 'chicken smothered with barbecue sauce" (*Empire Falls* 367).

Heteroglossia in *Empire Falls* emerges as well in various less transparent forms that nevertheless testify to the multi-linguistic aspect of the contemporary world. It is manifested in the use of vocabulary and expressions that relate to a particular aspect of life. For instance, medical terms are indexical of the health awareness in this day and age. In chapter one, Miles's consciousness is occupied by the thought of his daughter who was diagnosed with scoliosis. Every day Tick carries all her books in her backpack, leaving her school locker empty. The heavy backpack caused her scoliosis which is a slight curving of the spine. Scoliosis is symbolic of the heavy metaphorical burden younger people like Tick are shouldered with and which may result in irreversible deformities to the body and mind. Tick is not the only one with a distorted body feature; Horace, a journalist who frequents Empire Grill is known for a "purple fibroid cyst" that sits on his forehead and which looks like bursting anytime one looks his way. Very much like Tick's scoliosis, Horace's lump is hardly indicative of ugliness though it is unpleasant to look at. Later in the narrative, readers learn more about the ailments of this age such as father Tom's dementia, Grace's cancer and Cindy's crippled

Heteroglossia in Richard Russo's Empire Falls:
A Bakhtinian Exploration

body. This streak of illnesses is balanced by Walt Comeau's language of fitness, weight loss, youthful physique and healthy eating habits. Walt drinks only Green Mountain Coffee as he is an expert in healthy beverages such as protein shakes which he offers in his fitness club. Walt's language as a fitness club manager is all about exercise and healthy food and drinks and many other workouts expressions such as "washboard abs" (*Empire Falls* 10). Janine as well mentions the names of many fitness machines and devices with which Walt's gym is equipped. This language of fitness prevails on Janine's consciousness and sharpens her awareness of the gap between her past self as the fat wife of Miles and the present version of herself as the slim fiancé of Walt. Janine would have remained obese if not for Walt who encouraged her radical weight loss. The obsession with slimming is a hallmark of contemporary world standards of beauty. Tick, for instance, is often referred to as too skinny and as such she is suspected of having an eating disorder to the point that "she was often accused of being anorexic" (*Empire Falls* 39). Seeing Tick's skinny figure as an advantage, Janine "suggested she take some modeling classes. Tick had sneered that maybe she would, after her lobotomy, an answer that angered Janine "even before she looked up the word 'lobotomy'" (*Empire Falls* 275). The narrative abounds with references to medical conditions such as E. coli infection, viral meningitis, Lyme disease (which infected Buster's eye) and several others, a matter that indicates the accessibility of medical knowledge to almost everyone in this day and age.

Empire Falls is about what its characters feel, think, see and use. The characters seem to be occupied with cars and car brands. Miles, Max, David, Mrs Whiting and Minty do not fail to name the cars they ride or see others ride. Readers know a lot about Miles's ten-year-old red Jetta whose seats were sabotaged once by Mrs Whiting's cat, Charlene's dilapidated Hyundai Excel and customers's Audis. Cars are symbolic of change coming from the outside by rich people who are interested in the industrial revival of the town or at least Empire's people so like to think. At the Grill, Miles often hears gossip about spotting "a

Heteroglossia in Richard Russo's Empire Falls:
A Bakhtinian Exploration

black Lincoln Town Car with Massachusetts plates... in the lot outside the textile mill. Last year it had been a BMW, the year before that a Cadillac limo" (*Empire Falls* 25). Seeing these luxurious cars makes the townsfolk fantasize about the much desired change, which would save their town from decay. Certain cars are linked to tragic events such as the green Pontiac which crippled Cindy Whiting. It was described as a hit-and-run accident whereas in fact the three-year old Cindy was run over by her father. The green Pontiac is invented by Mrs Whiting to throw the police off the scent. A Cherokee was the car that could have almost killed or crippled Tick. The Cherokee was driven by Janine who kicked her daughter out of the car and drove before Tick made it safely to the pavement. Unlike Cindy, Tick was only bruised by the accident, but her regard to and trust in her mother were severely damaged. The Buick is also the place where Otto Meyer escapes to after an altercation with Doris Roderigue who lent her pass to Zack Minty allowing the latter to access the headmaster's office. Meyer "just sat in the Buick until he calmed down" (*Empire Falls* 406). A "secondhand Mercury Cougar" was the first car Max brought home, giving Miles who was then in his junior's year hope that he would soon learn to drive like every boy his age in Empire Falls. His father failed to teach him to drive and Miles had to take lessons every day after school for two months from none other than Mrs Whiting in her luxurious Lincoln which she could drive and park everywhere in the town without anybody objecting to it.

Heteroglossia in the novel is manifested as well in the religious language in which catholic rituals are described. Miles is an observing catholic who attends Mass without failure. Miles recalls how his mother had to confess her affair with Charlie Whiting to Father Tom after the vacation she spent in Martha's Vineyard: "Right inside, in the sacristy—the room's heavy air thick with stale incense and its open closet full of priestly vestments, Sunday's golden chalice safely in its nook, surrounded by all the necessary props of religious authority", Grace received her rather pricey absolution from Father Tom (*Empire Falls* 338). When

Heteroglossia in Richard Russo's Empire Falls:
A Bakhtinian Exploration

he was a schoolboy, Miles even served at the Sunday Mass which was conducted in Latin at St. Catherine's. Miles recalls how he was stationed: "at the offertory, after taking the cruets of water and wine to Father Tom, who always insisted they be presented to him handles first" (*Empire Falls* 345). *Empire Falls* hosts several dialogues about faith which is on the decline in this materialistic world as Father Mark and Miles agree. Further, the novel contains discussions whether inward or outward of such other topics as music and art. References are made to Abba, a Swedish pop group whose songs are repeatedly played during Janine's aerobic classes at Walt's fitness club. Tick finds it annoying to listen to her mother humming such Abba songs as Mama Mia and Dancing Queen upon her return home. Tick notices that her mother reserves Barry Manilow's Copa Cabana to her "advanced steppers" (*Empire Falls* 30). On the other hand, painting is discussed in Mrs. Doris Roderigue's Art class which Tick recently joined. Mrs. Roderigue has invented a language of colours which she uses to assign students to imaginary coloured tables (*Empire Falls* 385). Doris Roderigue sits Tick at the blue table which ranks the lowest and is reserved for the least motivated students among whom are also John Voss and Candace. Tick takes her interest in art very seriously; she often ponders over art and studies paintings by celebrated artists such as Picasso and Dali. Mrs Roderigue and Tick disagree on what makes art good and appealing. Sometimes, they have heated arguments on why Mrs Roderigue disapproves of Tick's snake and why Tick has no words of praise to talk about Doris Roderigue's favourite artist other than "fast". While Mrs Roderigue believes a word such as "sublime" should be used to describe Bill Taylor's art, Tick thinks of "fast" in consideration of the fact that he finishes his painting at one sitting (*Empire Falls* 383).

Conclusion

Empire Falls by Richard Russo is a novel in which heteroglossia defines characters who belong to a variety of social classes, educational backgrounds, professions, ages, and even ideologies. Even though all the narrative participants

Heteroglossia in Richard Russo's Empire Falls:
A Bakhtinian Exploration

come from almost the same geographical background, the diversity of characters on other levels impacts the linguistic input of the narrative and broadens its linguistic spectrum. The town of Empire Falls can be described as a prototype of America and a crucible in which many immigrants from Ireland, Spain, Italy, France and even Canada have settled and taken root. These different backgrounds flavour the narrative with multilingualism in the form of languages and accents. Therefore, the American English of the town is infiltrated by vocabulary and expressions that point to, for instance, the Spanish colonizers and the French emissaries.

This multilingual aspect of *Empire Falls* is evoked by jargons relevant to certain professions and occupations. In the book, foreign names of dishes tell about the Spanish, Mexican and French cuisines, the well-being craze of healthy food and exercise and the discussions of art in general and painting in particular. Heteroglossia also takes on the form of idiolects which have to do with the way a particular character speaks. A character may repeat certain catchphrases or employ certain international features that expose their age group, social, economic and educational backgrounds and intellectual capacity. As such, Tick and Candace speak a rather youngish English; Mrs. Whiting has her own patronizing language which Miles hates as much as he recalls affectionately his mother's catchphrases. On another note, Jimmy Minty's mispronunciation and grammatical mistakes are typical of his lacking education whereas Miles's expertise in Latin and Greek boasts of his good educational background.

*Heteroglossia in Richard Russo's Empire Falls:
A Bakhtinian Exploration*

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