
Multiplicity of Voices and Fascination with Ludicrous: A Heteroglossic and Carnavalesque Study of Dickens' Hard Times

Dr Chitwan¹, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar

Ms Himani Choudhary², Assistant Professor, Department of English, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar

Dr Sumneet Kaur³, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar

Paper Received on 04-04-2024, Accepted on 03-05-2024

Published on 05-05-24; DOI: 10.36993/ RJOE.2024.9.2.99

Abstract:

The paper delves into the intricate interplay of heteroglossia and the carnivalesque as narrative devices for representing social and economic upheavals in Charles Dickens's *Hard Times*. Heteroglossia, characterized by the inclusion of diverse perspectives, ideologies, and lived experiences, and the carnivalesque, defined by the subversion of established norms and the celebration of the grotesque, provide nuanced insights into the complexities of human expression and societal dynamics. The multiplicity of voices allows the author to illuminate the impact of historical forces like industrialization, urbanization, colonialism, war, and political upheaval on the lives of ordinary people. The analysis explores how these concepts enrich the understanding of Victorian England's historical context within the novel. It also analyses how the narrative serves as a window into the hopes, fears, and aspirations of diverse societal segments, shedding light on critical issues such as class struggle, gender inequality, racial tensions, and cultural shifts.

Keywords:Heteroglossia, Carnavalesque, Social upheaval, Economic upheaval, Victorian England, Polyphony, Dialogism

Introduction and Aim:

Within the vast corpus of literary production, novels frequently function as mimetic devices, reflecting the socio-economic realities of their historical moment. This is often achieved through the incorporation of heteroglossic elements, a motif characterized by the inclusion of diverse perspectives, ideologies, and lived experiences. Additionally, some novels employ a carnivalesque mode, a literary style defined by its subversion of established norms, fascination with the grotesque, and inversion of societal hierarchies. The concepts of heteroglossia and the carnivalesque may stand as distinct yet there are interconnected threads, offering unique insights into the complexities of human expression and societal dynamics. Both concepts celebrate diversity, complexity, and the fluidity of human expression, challenging rigid categories and hierarchies. Through the interplay of these heteroglossic voices and the carnivalesque disruption of the status quo, authors can offer nuanced insights into the social and economic upheavals of their eras. These insights can illuminate issues such as class struggle, industrialization, globalization, and cultural shifts. From the Industrial Revolution to the aftermath of World War II, British novelists have utilized these techniques of diverse perspectives and experiences to dissect the social cataclysms of their era. These novels function as potent mirrors reflecting the complexities of their times, offering poignant portrayals of the human costs and transformations wrought by large-scale change. The multiplicity of voices allows authors to illuminate the impact of historical forces like industrialization, urbanization, colonialism, war, and political upheaval on the lives of ordinary people. These narratives serve as windows into the hopes, fears, and aspirations of diverse

Research Journal Of English(RJOE)

ISSN:2456-2696;An International Peer-Reviewed and Refereed Journal;Impact Factor:8.16 (SJIF)

Indexed in: Cosmos, Google &International Scientific Indexing (ISI) etc

societal segments, shedding light on critical issues such as class struggle, gender inequality, racial tensions, and cultural shifts. The works that employ the carnivalesque mode present a world turned upside down. Here, societal norms are temporarily suspended, and the grotesque, the humorous, and the absurd come to the fore. Masked characters, bodily excesses, festive rituals, and the parody of authority figures all serve as vehicles for social critique. Through such transgressive elements, the carnivalesque challenges established power structures and offers glimpses of potential liberation and societal renewal.

The present study aims to explore the concept of a heteroglossia and carnivalesque narrative as a lens for examining the representation of social and economic upheavals in Charles Dickens's *Hard Times*. The analysis investigates how the novel's heteroglossic nature and its use of carnivalesque elements contribute to a nuanced understanding of the human condition within the historical context of Victorian England. Before embarking on this analysis, however, a thorough understanding of Mikhail Bakhtin's seminal concepts of heteroglossia and the carnivalesque is essential.

Background:

Mikhail Bakhtin, a prominent Russian philosopher, literary critic, and scholar, stands as one of the most influential figures in English literary theory in the latter half of the 20th century. Though his seminal works were composed in the 1920s, they remained largely inaccessible to the Western world until the 1970s. The translations by Katerina Clark, Michael Holquist, and Caryl Emerson, among others, introduced Bakhtin's ideas to the burgeoning field of post-structuralist criticism. Further contributions by Julia Kristeva and Tzvetan Todorov cemented his position as a central figure in literary theory, and his influence has continued to expand globally since the 1980s. While a circle of scholars including P.N. Medvedev, V.V. Voloshinov, and others collaborated with Bakhtin (often referred to as the 'Bakhtin Circle'), his contributions are generally considered to be the most significant. This circle emphasized the inherently dialogic nature of language production, arguing that meaning is forged through social interaction.

Drawing upon his seminal works, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1927), *The Dialogic Imagination* (1934-5), and *Rabelais and His World* (1965), Mikhail Bakhtin established and theorized a constellation of key concepts that have profoundly impacted literary theory. These include polyphony, heteroglossia, dialogism, and carnivalesque. Notably, Bakhtin's framework transcends the deconstructive emphasis on textual 'trace' found in Derrida's work and the archaeological approach to political discourse championed by Foucault. For Bakhtin, words are not static signifiers but rather living entities, constantly redeployed and imbued with the opinions, assertions, and beliefs of others. This inherent plurality of meaning in language necessitates an ongoing negotiation to partially accept and modify the voices we encounter. This dialogic nature, Bakhtin argues, permeates all speech, characterized by an 'internal polemic.' The novel, particularly the modern novel, becomes the prime exemplar of this phenomenon, allowing for the fullest exploration of such internal dialogues. Therefore, Bakhtin has emphasized language "as an area of social conflict, particularly in the way the discourse of characters in a literary work may disrupt and subvert the authority of ideology as expressed in a single voice of a narrator" (Wilfred 363).

Among Bakhtin's seminal concepts, polyphony is perhaps the most readily grasped by literary theorists. It signifies the presence of multiple, distinct voices within a literary work. Roger Fowler argues that polyphony is essentially synonymous with heteroglossia (96). However, heteroglossia encompasses the "larger polyphony of social and discursive forces" (Michael 69). It refers to the inherent multiplicity within language itself, where diverse voices carrying their own social, psychological, and linguistic weight can be heard. Bakhtin emphasizes that members of any culture engage with a multitude of languages at any given time. These languages are not literal tongues, but rather distinct forms of speech shaped by specific sets of values, assumptions, purposes, and social contexts. This highlights the fundamentally heteroglossic nature of language, where members of different social groups, age cohorts, professions, and countless other communities develop their unique registers. A work that exemplifies true heteroglossia would feature a clash of these diverse voices, with

no single voice dominating or suppressing another.

While distinct concepts, Mikhail Bakhtin's heteroglossia and dialogism, are intricately intertwined. Heteroglossia signifies the inherent multiplicity within language itself, encompassing the coexistence of diverse 'languages' – forms of speech shaped by specific social contexts, ideologies, and values. These 'languages' can be dialects, professional jargon, or specialized registers. Dialogism, on the other hand, focuses on the dynamic interaction between these languages within a text. Literary works can achieve heteroglossia through various techniques. Framing devices incorporated narratives, and the use of dialects all contribute to this effect. By presenting these distinct varieties of speech, the author highlights their differences and contextualizes them within specific worldviews. Dialogism, however, serves as the overarching principle in Bakhtin's framework, encompassing both polyphony and heteroglossia. It emphasizes the inherent 'addressedness' of language. All utterances, Bakhtin argues, are inherently dialogic, directed towards an audience, and shaped by the speaker's consciousness of their relationship with that audience. As Lynne Pearce observes, Bakhtin's conception of language elevates 'dialogue' and 'difference' to fundamental principles of thought itself.

Among Bakhtin's influential concepts, the carnivalesque, explored extensively in *Rabelais and His World*, has garnered significant attention from contemporary and cultural theorists. This concept, often simply referred to as 'carnival,' has been productively appropriated to analyze texts and events that enact a temporary subversion of established hierarchies. At its core, the carnivalesque challenges the hegemony of any singular ideology that seeks to impose a monologic view of the world. Through its inherent subversion, it opens up a space to explore alternative constructions of meaning and the potential for living differently. The carnivalesque, as theorized by Bakhtin, closely mirrors the transgressive spirit of real-world carnivals, where social hierarchies are temporarily inverted and marginalized voices gain expression. These festive periods function as safety valves, allowing for a critique of dominant ideologies by those who are typically silenced. Similarly, in literature, the carnivalesque mode introduces a cacophony of voices from diverse social strata. These voices engage in a free exchange, mocking and subverting authority, transgressing social norms through bawdy humor, and profaning what is normally considered sacred. The carnivalesque thus emerges as a potent theory of resistance, a celebration of liberation from all forms of domination. Bakhtin underscores this point by arguing that the carnival "is the place for working out a new mode of interrelationship between individuals... people who in life are separated by impenetrable barriers enter into a free and familiar contact on the carnival square" (127). However, Bakhtin goes beyond the literal carnival, tracing the echoes of the carnivalesque in the works of ancient, medieval, and Renaissance writers. In the context of modern literature, any act or phenomenon that challenges established traditions can be understood as an example of carnivalization.

Analysis:

1. Multiplicity of voices

Charles Dickens' acclaimed work, *Hard Times*, hailed as a 'masterpiece' by F.R. Leavis, is particularly illuminating when analyzed through a Bakhtinian lens, particularly in terms of heteroglossia and carnivalesque. Dickens seamlessly integrates heteroglossia and the carnivalesque to create a narrative landscape that reflects the complexities of Victorian society. The novel adeptly portrays a multitude of distinct voices emanating from diverse social and linguistic strata, each endowed with its validity and truth, the ludicrousness of characters, bizarre circumstances, and deliberate satire. Through the celebration of linguistic diversity, the subversion of traditional norms, and the critique of societal injustices, Dickens invites readers to engage with the complexities of industrialized society and envision alternative possibilities for social change. By weaving together these two concepts, Dickens creates a narrative tapestry that is at once heteroglossic and carnivalesque, reflecting the diverse voices and irreverent spirit of Victorian England.

Hard Times vividly captures the clash of ideologies and lifestyles prevalent in Victorian society through the exploration of the multiplicity of voices. This conflict is epitomized in the opposition between opposing binaries such as fact versus fancy, reason versus emotion, and the mechanistic

Research Journal Of English(RJOE)

ISSN:2456-2696;An International Peer-Reviewed and Refereed Journal;Impact Factor:8.16 (SJIF)

Indexed in: Cosmos, Google &International Scientific Indexing (ISI) etc

existence of the "human machines" versus the more holistic nature of "human beings." Central to this clash of voices are the contrasting perspectives embodied by characters like Thomas Gradgrind and Josiah Bounderby, who represent the utilitarian ethos, and the circus community overseen by Sleary, where compassion and vitality reign supreme. The juxtaposition of these viewpoints serves to highlight the discord between rationalism and imagination, austerity and warmth, and the dehumanizing effects of industrialization versus the nurturing environment of the circus.

Furthermore, *Hard Times* delves into the perspectives of the working class, which offers yet another layer of truth and assumptions. These voices, often marginalized and overlooked by the dominant social order, contribute to the rich tapestry of heteroglossia in the narrative. Through their experiences and struggles, Dickens exposes the inequalities and injustices inherent in Victorian society, further underscoring the complexity and diversity of human existence. Through the clash of these voices, Dickens offers a profound commentary on the conflicting values and ideologies of his time, inviting readers to critically engage with the complexities of the human condition. In addition, these emerging voices strengthen Bakhtin's concepts further, as all languages of heteroglossia:

...are specific points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words, specific world views, each characterized by its objects, meanings, and values. As such they may be juxtaposed to one another, mutually supplement one another, contradict one another, and be interrelated dialogically (36).

Homo-economics of Thomas Gradgrind

The narrative of *Hard Times* commences with the arresting voice of Thomas Gradgrind, whose declarations resonate prominently throughout the text: "Now, What I want is, Fact...Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else and root out everything else" (1). Gradgrind emerges as a figure emblematic of rigorous and austere philosophy, as implied by his surname, epitomizing an ideology of relentless pursuit of materialistic ends. As an educator and Member of Parliament, Gradgrind embodies a commitment to empirical evidence, statistical analysis, and pragmatic endeavors. Consequently, he adopts an educational approach akin to the experimental methods endorsed by John Stuart Mill (author of the book: *Utilitarianism* and former member of the Parliament of the UK), believing it to be conducive to his children's intellectual development. His residence, Stone Lodge, serves as a tangible manifestation of the suffocating environment synonymous with the utilitarian ethos he ardently champions. Gradgrind's unwavering dedication to practicality leads to his daughter, Louisa, entering a marital arrangement with Josiah Bounderby, a decision ultimately marred by disillusionment and dissatisfaction.

At the heart of Mr. Gradgrind's worldview lies a philosophy grounded in the principles of homo economicus, the rational actor solely motivated by calculated self-interest. He subscribes to the belief that human behavior can be governed by entirely rational regulations, and his ambition extends to the quantification of every aspect of human nature. During an interaction with his students, Mr. Gradgrind prompts them to define a horse. He expresses contentment upon receiving an exceedingly objective and concrete response from Bitzer, who delineates the characteristics of a horse in precise detail: "Quadruped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth, namely twenty-four grinders, four eye teeth, and twelve incisive. Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries, sheds hoofs too. Hoofs are hard but require to be shod with iron. Age is known by marks in the mouth" (Dickens 4). This utilitarian philosophy has demonstrably yielded Mr. Gradgrind considerable financial and social prosperity. His wealth stems from his successful career as a hardware merchant, a profession inherently linked to the tangible, material world. Gradgrind, characterized by the mechanical cadence of his discourse, prioritizes calculations and factual analysis above all else. He places paramount importance on empirical data and rationality. Dickens introduces him as a man of measurement in the second chapter:

Thomas Gradgrind, sir. A man of realities. A man of facts and calculations. A man who proceeds upon the principle that two and two are four, and nothing over, and who is not to be talked into allowing for anything over. . . With a rule and a pair of scales, and the multiplication table always in his pocket, sir, ready to weigh and measure any parcel of human nature, and tell

Research Journal Of English(RJOE)

ISSN:2456-2696;An International Peer-Reviewed and Refereed Journal;Impact Factor:8.16 (SJIF)

Indexed in: Cosmos, Google &International Scientific Indexing (ISI) etc

you exactly what it comes to. It is a mere question of figures, a case of simple arithmetic. . . In such terms, Mr. Gradgrind always mentally introduced himself. (2)

Leveraging his success, he has ascended to the esteemed position of Member of Parliament, a platform that allows him to indulge his fondness for the systematic collection of data concerning the English populace. While not a factory owner himself, Mr. Gradgrind's treatment of individuals as automatons reducible to a set of scientific principles embodies the ethos of the Industrial Revolution writ large.

Utilitarian Policies of Josiah Bounderby

Josiah Bounderby, in a manner parallel to Gradgrind, emerges as a symbolic embodiment of utilitarian economic principles, representing the affluent bourgeois class with an air of boastfulness and self-aggrandizement. Dickens employs a satirical tone to depict Bounderby as the "bully of humility," a characterization underscored by the whimsical description of him having talked his hair off (37). While ostensibly Mr. Gradgrind's closest associate, Josiah Bounderby prioritizes the pursuit of wealth and social stature over factual truth. Indeed, his persona is a meticulously crafted construction, rife with fabrication and self-deception. Bounderby's inflated self-importance manifests in his frequent proclamation, "I am Josiah Bounderby of Coketown," often followed by a performative narrative. This narrative, detailing his supposed path from impoverished beginnings to success through grit and determination, serves to impress upon his audience his self-made status. However, Dickens dismantles this carefully constructed facade through the revelation of Mrs. Pegler, Bounderby's mother. Her testimony exposes the myth of abandonment, revealing instead a childhood marked by relative comfort and access to education. Bounderby's persona, demeanor, and ideology thus exemplify the societal transformations wrought by the Industrial Revolution and the rise of capitalism. In this new order, lineage or social standing lose their former dominance over social hierarchy. Wealth becomes the primary determinant of power dynamics.

Bounderby revels in this inversion, as evidenced by his employment of Mrs. Sparsit, a fallen aristocrat, as his servant. This situation highlights his rise from presumed humble beginnings to the position of a wealthy factory owner and banker. However, Dickens' portrayal of Bounderby, the archetypal capitalist, is far from flattering. He is depicted as a coarse, narcissistic, and self-serving hypocrite. Dickens suggests that Bounderby wields his influence and wealth irresponsibly, exacerbating the chasm between the affluent and the impoverished. As a manufacturer and proprietor of factories, Bounderby's discourse is imbued with an aura of arrogance and callousness towards his employees, whom he perceives merely as expendable 'hands' rather than individuals with inherent dignity and rights. His rhetoric reflects the prevailing ideology, assumptions, and objectives of his social stratum, characterized by a lack of empathy and exploitative practices towards the working class. This is particularly evident in Bounderby's dealing with Stephen Blackpool following the formation of the Union by the Hands.

Bounderby's treatment of Stephen Blackpool serves as a poignant illustration of his disdain and indifference towards his workforce. Despite Blackpool's plight as a marginalized and exploited worker, Bounderby exhibits a complete lack of sympathy or concern, further underscoring his exploitative nature and dehumanizing attitude towards those he perceives as mere laborers. Stephen Blackpool articulates to Mr. Bounderby the assertion that individuals possess intrinsic worth beyond mere mechanistic functionality, emphasizing the presence of souls within human beings. Mr. Bounderby, entrenched in his worldview and unable to entertain perspectives divergent from his own, promptly dismisses Stephen's assertion. Subsequently, Stephen departs from Bounderby's company with a resigned lamentation, expressing a sentiment indicative of a profound disillusionment with the prevailing social order: "Heaven help us in this world" (136). This poignant moment serves to underscore the pervasive dehumanization experienced by workers within the industrial system, wherein their intrinsic humanity and spiritual dimensions are disregarded in favor of mechanistic efficiency and utilitarian objectives.

Research Journal Of English(RJOE)

ISSN:2456-2696;An International Peer-Reviewed and Refereed Journal;Impact Factor:8.16 (SJIF)

Indexed in: Cosmos, Google &International Scientific Indexing (ISI) etc

Linguistic Distinctiveness and Unique Ethos at the Circus

The circus troupe, under the management of Sleary, serves as a microcosm that encapsulates the diverse voices and perspectives of circus performers spanning various age groups and genders, thereby establishing a distinct and self-contained social sphere. Within this enclave, a unique ethos prevails—one that emphasizes the harmonious integration of intellectual acumen and emotional depth in the understanding and experience of life. This worldview stands in stark contrast to the discourse propagated by the educated bourgeois class, which prioritizes utilitarian values and rationality over emotional intuition. The circus performers, constituting a cohesive professional community, possess their specialized lexicon and modes of communication that may appear opaque to outsiders. This linguistic distinctiveness is evident in instances where E.M.B. Childers and Kidderminster employ circus jargon to convey information to Gradgrind and Bounderby regarding Sissy's father's departure, referring to him as having "cut" (run away) due to being repeatedly "goosed" (hissed) (28). However, the educated gentlemen find themselves perplexed by this unfamiliar terminology, highlighting the linguistic and cultural barriers between the two social spheres.

Moreover, Sleary, with his distinctive lisp and penchant for brandy, further enriches the tapestry of voices within the circus community. Sleary, in a feat to defend his circus people, asserts on Mr. Bounderby,

I tell you what, Thquire. To speak plainly to you, my opinion ith that you had better cut it through and drop it. They're a very good-natur'd people, my people, but they're accustomed to being quick in their movements; and if you don't act upon my advice, I'm damned if I don't believe they'll pith you out o' winder. (33)

His idiosyncratic speech patterns and philosophical musings imbued with the influence of alcohol contribute to the vibrant diversity of perspectives within the troupe.

Sissy, "Girl number twenty," intricately linked to the circus milieu, emerges as a voice characterized by unadulterated authenticity and innate human kindness, devoid of any semblance of artifice or pretense (2). Despite being thrust into the sphere of "metallurgical" pursuits—a domain steeped in the discourse of crass utilitarian materialism—she manages to preserve the essence of her "tender young imaginations" amidst the cacophony of competing discourses (10). Her association with the circus establishment imbues her with a sense of rawness and innocence, qualities that serve as a stark contrast to the prevailing ethos of industrialized society. Her upbringing within the unconventional confines of the circus fosters a worldview centered on compassion, empathy, and emotional authenticity, values that stand in direct opposition to the cold rationality and materialistic pursuits championed by figures like Gradgrind and Bounderby. Despite being exposed to the rigid utilitarian ideology espoused by her guardians and societal norms, Sissy remains steadfast in her adherence to the principles of kindness and imagination. Her unwavering commitment to these virtues allows her to navigate the complexities of the multi-vocal discourse surrounding her, serving as a beacon of humanity amidst the dehumanizing forces of industrialization and capitalism.

Pronounced Regional Dialect of the Working Class

The working class, as portrayed in *Hard Times*, constitutes a distinct discourse that contributes to the diverse array of voices present within the narrative. This segment of society finds representation primarily through characters such as Stephen Blackpool, Rachel, and Slackbridge, each of whom speaks with a pronounced regional dialect characteristic of their socioeconomic background. This linguistic distinction serves to underscore their marginalized status within the hierarchical structure of Victorian society. Stephen Blackpool, in particular, emerges as a poignant embodiment of the working-class ethos, speaking with a vernacular marked by understatement and simplicity. His description of his wife as having been "pretty enow" exemplifies the linguistic conventions favored by dialect speakers, reflecting a mode of expression rooted in humility and pragmatism. During a conversation between Mr. Bounderby and Stephen Blackpool, the former admonishes the latter to observe propriety and decorum when conversing in the presence of a lady, despite her role as a domestic servant in Mr. Bounderby's household. To this, Stephan replies, "Sir, I hope I never had nowt to say not fitten for a born lady to

Research Journal Of English(RJOE)

ISSN:2456-2696;An International Peer-Reviewed and Refereed Journal;Impact Factor:8.16 (SJIF)

Indexed in: Cosmos, Google &International Scientific Indexing (ISI) etc

year, sin I were born myself" (Dickens 63-64). This exchange underscores the intricacies of social etiquette and hierarchy prevalent in Victorian society, wherein individuals are expected to adhere to established norms of behavior and respect the dignity of those occupying higher social positions. Throughout the narrative, such instances abound, lending authenticity and richness to the portrayal of working-class life in Coketown. Significantly, Stephen's character embodies the values of honesty and integrity, despite his impoverished circumstances. His dialogue often takes on a moralizing tone, serving as a stark contrast to the moral bankruptcy and materialistic pursuits of the wealthy industrialists who dominate the narrative landscape. By presenting Stephen as a dignified yet penniless worker, Dickens highlights the inherent dignity and resilience of the working class in the face of exploitation and adversity.

Conversely, Slackbridge represents a different facet of working-class discourse, characterized by verbosity and rhetorical flourish. As a skilled orator, he employs various rhetorical devices such as elegant variation and alliteration to sway his audience. However, beneath his polished exterior lies a morally depraved individual, whose manipulation and deceit stand in stark contrast to Stephen's moral rectitude. Through the juxtaposition of these characters, Dickens underscores the complexity and diversity of working-class experiences, challenging stereotypes and offering a nuanced portrayal of their struggles and aspirations.

Within the narrative landscape of the novel, the diverse voices discussed above converge in a captivating spectacle of clashes and intersections, each asserting its truth and assumptions. Stylistically, the text traverses a wide spectrum, ranging from lofty moral sermonizing to the rich tapestry of thick social dialects. Characters such as Bounderby embody a phony bluntness, while others like Sleary communicate through a distinct lisp, thereby employing a diverse array of rhetorical strategies. This stylistic diversity not only facilitates a heteroglossic reading of the text but also opens avenues for carnivalesque insights.

1.The juxtaposition of Carnavalesque and Grotesque

The prevailing sensibilities and dominant ideological framework in *Hard Times* are epitomized by the utilitarian principle and the laissez-faire doctrine. These principles articulate a monologic perspective of the societal power structure, reinforcing a hegemonic discourse that prioritizes efficiency and individualistic pursuits. However, this hegemonic narrative is contested and destabilized by the counterclaims and aspirations of the working class, as well as the exuberance and vitality exhibited by the circus troupe. Both the working-class community and the circus troupe, situated within the lower echelons of the social hierarchy, serve as conduits for the expression of divergent values and perspectives that challenge the hegemonic order. In contrast to the utilitarian ethos of rationality and pragmatism, these marginalized communities seek to imbue life with multifaceted meanings and alternative modes of existence

Bakhtin's conceptualization of carnival delineates it as a manifestation of "festive life." Within literary discourse, carnivalization emerges as a literary device serving as a counterpoint to the authoritative and formal discourse of officialdom. It operates by juxtaposing one or more unofficial voices against the dominant discourse, thereby challenging established norms and conventional wisdom. Characterized by its irreverence, ribaldry, informality, colloquialism, and open-mindedness, carnivalization fosters a multiplicity of meanings rather than adhering to a singular, monologic interpretation sanctioned by official discourse. This subversive literary strategy serves to destabilize hegemonic power structures and disrupt the hegemony of sanctioned ideologies, offering alternative perspectives and fostering critical engagement with prevailing socio-cultural paradigms.

Sleary's Circus Troupe

Viewed through the lens of carnivalesque discourse, the circus performers emerge as fitting embodiments of subversion and resistance within the narrative fabric of *Hard Times*. The pervasive voice of Sleary's circus resonates throughout the text, engaging in a continual clash with and satirical parody of the austere and dehumanizing principles espoused by utilitarianism. These individuals carve out their distinct realm—a realm characterized by a celebration of life's intrinsic joys and a rejection of

Research Journal Of English(RJOE)

ISSN:2456-2696;An International Peer-Reviewed and Refereed Journal;Impact Factor:8.16 (SJIF)

Indexed in: Cosmos, Google &International Scientific Indexing (ISI) etc

the oppressive materialism that dominates the broader societal landscape. In their self-contained world, the circus troupe cultivates an atmosphere of joyful liberation, defiantly asserting the vitality and spontaneity of the human spirit in the face of utilitarian tyranny. The advertised performances, such as the 'equestrians Tyrolean flower-act' – presumably a creative spectacle combining horsemanship with floral displays – and 'Master Kidderminster as Cupid, complete with curls, wreaths, and wings,' offer a potent escape for the factory workers. These fantastical elements provide a temporary respite from the oppressive monotony and squalor that define their everyday lives.

While the talents of the circus people may hold little value in the utilitarian calculus, they serve as expressions of essential human impulses and fulfill vital human needs that transcend mere economic utility. For instance, the seemingly frivolous and wasteful act of horse-riding, which is derided by figures like Gradgrind and scorned by Bounderby, offers the denizens of Coketown a respite from their monotonous existence and introduces them to the realm of art and aesthetic pleasure. Moreover, it serves as a spectacle of triumphant activity—an activity that finds its purpose and fulfillment within itself, rather than being solely driven by utilitarian ends. The views of the author merge with the voice of Sleary when he says: "People must be amused, Thquire, somehow. They cant be Alwayth al working, nor yet they can be always a learning" (36). This statement adeptly illustrates the concept of 'double-voiced discourse,' wherein an author utilizes the speech of one character to convey underlying authorial intentions indirectly, thereby imparting depth and complexity to the narrative. Mikhail Bakhtin characterizes this phenomenon as "another's speech in another's language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way" (40). Dickens, through imbuing a traveling circus with symbolic significance, transcends conventional expectations, offering a nuanced critique of industrialism. Juxtaposed against the grim realities of Coketown, the circus with clowns, acrobats, and elaborate horse-riding shows based on legendary themes signifies the triumph of imagination and whimsy, concepts Mr. Gradgrind would undoubtedly dismiss as mere "fancy." Despite the disdain of affluent figures like Mr. Gradgrind and Mr. Bounderby, the virtuosity demanded by circus performances – evident in the exceptional skill and rigorous training required – challenges their utilitarian worldview. This highlights the diverse range of expertise and talent that can contribute to a meaningful and productive life, one that extends beyond the confines of purely empirical experience. The circus, moreover, transcends mere escapism. It embodies an alternative conception of success and prosperity, one that values creativity, imagination, and the cultivation of wonder. Conversely, the rejection of the circus signifies a reductive perspective, one that disregards the legitimacy of imaginative forms of human pleasure and artistic expression. This artistic choice underscores Dickens' profound engagement with the socio-economic milieu of his era, revealing a layered response to industrialization that exceeds simplistic assessments.

The metallurgical grotesqueness

However, the grotesqueness in the narrative is indeed endowed with a truly subversive power and with a desire to destabilize authority and its serious, official, one-sided, vertical vision of the world. The grotesque imagery as such emerges from the graphic satire, from cartoon caricature using few, but telling lines. In Dickens' depiction of Coketown, a grotesque element is discernible. The town is portrayed as a grim bastion devoid of natural beauty, "a town of unnatural red and black," where the encroachment of industrialization is substantial and looks "like the painted face of a savage" (19). The cityscape is characterized by "a town of machinery and tall chimneys," with brick walls serving as barriers against the outside world, encapsulating within them noxious airs and gases, "an interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves forever and ever, and never got uncoiled" (19). The architectural layout, consisting of a maze-like network of narrow alleys and congested thoroughfares "all very like one another" hastily erected for utilitarian purposes "inhabited by people equally like one another, who all went in and out at the same hours, ..., to whom every day was the same as yesterday and tomorrow" (19). It engenders an unnatural environment that fosters a sense of claustrophobia and entrapment among its inhabitants. This dense urban fabric gives rise to a communal existence marked by a relentless struggle for space and resources, wherein individuals are compelled to jostle, trample, and oppress one

Research Journal Of English(RJOE)

ISSN:2456-2696;An International Peer-Reviewed and Refereed Journal;Impact Factor:8.16 (SJIF)

Indexed in: Cosmos, Google &International Scientific Indexing (ISI) etc

another in their pursuit of survival. Moreover, rather symbolically, Coketown houses a melancholic frenzy with its "vast piles of building full of windows" where incessant trembling and rattling persists and "where the piston of the steam engine worked monotonously up and down like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness" (19). Additionally, the chimneys of Coketown, rendered stunted and contorted due to a dearth of ventilation, serve as symbolic reflections of the distorted and deformed lives led by its denizens, further accentuating the grotesque nature of the urban landscape

Another compelling example illustrating this phenomenon is evident in the initial portrayal of Gradgrind, whose depiction assumes an almost nonsensically inhuman form, resembling a geometric figure dominated by squareness, as manifested in his "square coat, square legs, square shoulders" (1). As the narrative progresses, the deleterious impact of Gradgrind's rigid adherence to his utilitarian philosophy becomes palpable, eliciting a sense of revulsion as observers witness the detrimental effects of his uncompromising principles on the younger generation. However, amid this disconcerting spectacle, a poignant undercurrent of pathos emerges, as Gradgrind and those in his orbit are ultimately reduced to a state of grotesqueness by the relentless imposition of his ideology. Gradgrind's transformation into a living embodiment of the very principles he espouses serves as a sobering reminder of the dehumanizing consequences inherent in the unwavering pursuit of utilitarianism, rendering him and his milieu grotesque in their adherence to an ethos devoid of empathy and compassion.

In a similar vein, the parliamentary setting is depicted as a self-interested forum characterized by incessant chatter, thereby detracting from its perceived authority and significance. Dickens employs the metaphor of a "little noisy and rather dirty machinery" to convey the mundane and unremarkable nature of parliamentary proceedings, thereby highlighting the banality and triviality of political discourse (82). This portrayal is further emphasized through the description of Gradgrind's transformation over time in the parliamentary context. Gradgrind, once a figure of authority and influence, is depicted as being relegated to a subordinate position in the parliamentary hierarchy, symbolized by his characterization as "One of the deaf honorable gentlemen, dumb honorable gentlemen, blind honorable gentlemen, lame honorable gentlemen, dead honorable gentlemen" (83). The characterization serves to underscore the ineffectiveness and insignificance of individual members within the larger bureaucratic apparatus of Parliament, highlighting the disillusionment and cynicism inherent within the political system. Moreover, the elements of humor and grotesquery in its portrayal of Mr. Bounderby's physical appearance and subsequent public exposure effectively puncture the facade of self-aggrandizement and ostentation associated with the bourgeois class.

The world depicted in *Hard Times* operates in a meticulously organized framework governed by two overarching principles: materialism and self-interest. These principles serve to constrict the spectrum of human potentiality, foregrounding the material aspects of existence while marginalizing considerations of spiritual depth. The implementation of such an ideology vividly elucidates the plight endured by the working class and the young children subjected to an education devoid of imaginative nourishment, epitomizing a reduction of life to meager dimensions and a deliberate suppression of spiritual vitality. This deliberate diminishment of the human spirit fundamentally manifests as grotesque. In this context, the stifling ambiance of Coketown emerges as a symbol of the pervasive emphasis on factual precision and the exclusion of any alternative perspectives, encapsulating the prevailing worldview characterized by an unwavering commitment to empirical facts at the expense of broader human experiences.

Pervasive Vibrancy of Circus and Laughter

In the carnivalesque tradition, the cultivation of laughter assumes a significant role, serving as a mechanism through which societal divisions are momentarily dissolved in communal revelry. This form of laughter, as delineated by Bakhtin, encompasses a communal merriment that transcends human and societal boundaries, fostering a sense of unity and shared humanity. *Hard Times* adeptly encapsulates this characteristic feature through its portrayal of the circus establishment, which functions as a locus for the convergence of individuals from diverse strata of society. Within the narrative, the

Research Journal Of English(RJOE)

ISSN:2456-2696;An International Peer-Reviewed and Refereed Journal;Impact Factor:8.16 (SJIF)

Indexed in: Cosmos, Google &International Scientific Indexing (ISI) etc

circus troupe employs various comic devices, such as dressing as jesters and enacting humorous skits, to elicit laughter from its audience. Particularly noteworthy is the character of Sleary, whose distinctive lisp serves as a source of hearty amusement. Through these comic performances, the circus not only entertains the masses but also presents an alternative way of life that stands in contrast to the rigid dictates of the dominant ideology.

Furthermore, the motif of circus permeates the entirety of the narrative, assuming the role of an omnipresent force that inundates the novel with a continuous spectacle, akin to an unending theatre production. This pervasive circus imagery manifests through a multitude of themes, metaphors, and structural elements, effectively infiltrating all facets of the text. In doing so, it disrupts the ostensibly clear dichotomy between fact and fancy—a dichotomy emphasized by Gradgrind's educational philosophy, which staunchly advocates for a world governed solely by empirical truths. Despite Gradgrind's insistence on a curriculum devoid of imagination and fanciful notions, his educational establishment gradually adopts characteristics reminiscent of a circus arena. Within this 'factual ring,' students are subjected to a regimen that mirrors the structured performances of circus acts. Similarly, the industrial landscape of Coketown begins to mirror the chaotic spectacle of the circus, with the factory transforming into a stage where the Hands, or laborers, assume the roles of skilled performers. However, unlike the grandeur and allure associated with circus performers, the Hands in the Factory are depicted as melancholic and monstrous, evoking a sense of physical grotesqueness that underscores the dehumanizing nature of the industrial system. In this way, the juxtaposition of the factory as a dark imitation of the circus serves to highlight the stark contrast between the oppressive "metallic" values of industrialization and the vitality and vibrancy associated with the world of the circus.

As the novel nears its conclusion, Dickens ingeniously orchestrates a convergence of major characters within the confines of the circus establishment. This culminating moment, wherein Sleary aids Tom, who is disguised in circus attire, in evading capture by Bitzer, serves as a satirical critique of the oppressive principles espoused by the inhuman utilitarian regime. By staging this subversion in the carnivalesque space of the circus, Dickens undermines the authority and legitimacy of the dominant social order, effectively mocking its inflated pretensions and moral bankruptcy.

Carnavalesque—A Ground of Contestation

It is imperative to recognize that carnival, as a mode of expression, epitomizes liberation from established norms and values, representing a form of communication characterized by unbridled frankness and freedom. During the carnival, there exists an absence of hierarchical distance between individuals, with social conventions of etiquette and decency relinquished in favor of uninhibited interaction. Mikhail Bakhtin discerns in the concept of carnival a significant potential for explosive subversion, as it serves to disrupt and challenge the dominance of master discourses. Indeed, the carnival, by its very nature, resists the perpetuation of fixed and unchallenged hegemonic narratives, facilitating instead the emergence of alternative voices and perspectives through the revelry it engenders.

Circus performers, in their transient roles, embody a form of freedom that allows them to traverse geographical and social boundaries with ease. Roger Fowler and other scholars have explored the Bakhtinian notion of carnivalization within literary texts, positing insightful readings that shed light on the polyphony and heteroglossia inherent in the narrative. This perspective is particularly salient in the case of characters such as the "Hands" and Sleary, whose use of colloquialisms and tampered dialogue evokes a sense of carnivalesque disruption within the text. Nevertheless, while circus folk may symbolize a potential inversion of social hierarchies, their freedom remains transient and contingent upon their itinerant lifestyle as they are, "not stationary here, being but comers and goers anywhere" (30). This stands in stark contrast to the workers of Coketown, whose lives are characterized by far greater social restriction and economic exploitation in the confines of the industrial landscape. Despite the superficial resemblance between the workers' plight and the circus performers' freedom, the former is ultimately constrained by the oppressive structures of the capitalist system, relegating them to marginalized and subordinate social roles.

Research Journal Of English(RJOE)

ISSN:2456-2696;An International Peer-Reviewed and Refereed Journal;Impact Factor:8.16 (SJIF)

Indexed in: Cosmos, Google &International Scientific Indexing (ISI) etc

Conclusion:

Hard Times serves as a compelling case study through the lens of Bakhtin's theoretical frameworks of heteroglossia and carnivalesque. A defining characteristic of Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* is that the novel's narrative canvas teems with a multiplicity of voices, each representing a distinct perspective on the tumultuous social and economic realities of Victorian England. Through figures like Mr. Gradgrind, Dickens embodies the utilitarian philosophy, emphasizing reason and logic. In stark contrast, characters such as Sissy Jupe offer impassioned pleas for compassion, advocating for a more humane approach to life. This rich tapestry of conflicting ideologies and worldviews not only adds depth and complexity to the narrative but also serves as a powerful lens through which to explore the social dynamics of the era. Central to the novel's thematic exploration is the clash between Mr. Gradgrind's unwavering utilitarianism and the countervailing values embodied by Sissy Jupe and Stephen Blackpool. Mr. Gradgrind, with his relentless focus on facts and figures, epitomizes the cold rationalism of the industrial age. Conversely, Sissy Jupe represents a more intuitive and empathetic worldview. Through this juxtaposition, Dickens exposes the inherent limitations of utilitarianism and underscores the profound human cost associated with its rigid application in the social sphere.

Beyond the heteroglossia that animates *Hard Times*, Charles Dickens also masterfully deploys elements of the carnivalesque to critique the rigid social order and moral austerity of Victorian England. While the novel lacks literal carnival scenes, it captures the subversive spirit of the carnival through its grotesque characters, absurd situations, and strategically employed satire. One prominent carnivalesque element is Dickens' use of larger-than-life characters who defy societal norms and expectations. Throughout the narrative, a colorful cast of grotesquely eccentric figures populate Dickens' world. From the bombastic hypocrisy of Josiah Bounderby to the enigmatic theatricality of Mr. Sleary, these characters disrupt the moral order and conventional expectations of Victorian society. Their exaggerated traits and outlandish personalities serve as a form of social critique, highlighting the absurdity inherent in the world they inhabit. This compels readers to question the legitimacy of authority and the limitations of utilitarianism as a guiding principle. Dickens further employs satire, another key element of the carnivalesque, to parody the shortcomings of Victorian society. Through witty dialogue, ironic juxtapositions, and the creation of absurd situations, he exposes the follies and hypocrisies of his characters and their adherence to rigid moral codes. Whether it's the self-important pronouncements of Mr. Gradgrind or the comically inept machinations of Mrs. Sparsit, the novel abounds with moments of comedic absurdity that subvert the seriousness of Victorian moral discourse. Finally, *Hard Times* aligns with the carnivalesque spirit by exploring subversive themes such as liberation, rebellion, and the quest for authenticity. Characters like Sissy Jupe and Stephen Blackpool embody a spirit of resilience and defiance in the face of oppressive social structures. They challenge the authority of their superiors and assert their right to self-determination. Their refusal to conform to societal expectations represents a carnivalesque inversion of power dynamics, where the marginalized seize agency and reclaim their humanity.

Works Cited:

- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
- _____. "Discourse in the Novel." *Literary Theory: An Anthropology*, Ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, Wiley-Blackwell, 2017, pp. 205-16.
- Brook, G. L. *The Language of Dickens*. London, 1970.
- Dickens, Charles. *Hard Times*. Heinemann Educational Books, 1970.
- Fowler, Roger. "Polyphony and Problematic in *Hard Times*." *Charles Dickens*. Edited by Steven Connor, London: Longman, 1996, pp. 100-16.
- Guerin, L. Wilfred. *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*. Oxford UP, 2009.
- Hill, K. Nancy. *A Reformer's Art: Dickens Picturesque and Grotesque Imagery*. Ohio UP, 1981.

Research Journal Of English(RJOE)

ISSN:2456-2696;An International Peer-Reviewed and Refereed Journal;Impact Factor:8.16 (SJIF)

Indexed in: Cosmos, Google &International Scientific Indexing (ISI) etc

Holquist, Michael. *Dialogism*. Routledge, 2002.

Anand Bajaj. "Introducing Bakhtin." *Pragti English Journal*, Vol 8 no. 1, 2008, pp. 23-31.

Tiwari, V.K..*Bakhtin: Dialogics of Language*. Books Plus, 2001.

Waugh, Patricia. "Bakhtin and the Dialogic Principle." *Literary Theory and Criticism: An Oxford Guide*. Edited by Lynne Pearce, Oxford UP, 2006.

How to cite this article?

Dr Chitwan, Ms Himani Choudhary, Dr Sunneet Kaur, "Multiplicity of Voices and Fascination with Ludicrous: A Heteroglossic and Carnavalesque Study of Dickens' Hard Times" *Research Journal Of English (RJOE)*9(2),PP:88-99,2024, DOI:10.36993/RJOE.2024.9.2.99