



**Origins of Bakhtin’s Theory of Carnivalization.**

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**ABSTRACT**

This research will shed light here on the early beginnings of the carnival as a public ceremony in which everything turns upside down, and the sources from which Mikhail Bakhtin derives his theory of carnivalization. Bakhtin builds his theory on ancient celebrations which extend to late antiquity. Bakhtin discusses the historical origins of the Roman, Greek, and Egyptian festivals to illustrate that carnival celebrations go back to ancient pagan festivals. The influence of these festivities is immense in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. They were characterized by their popularity and so they were imitated by all people. The importance of the pagan festivities obligated the church to Christianize these celebrations to keep its followers away from these pagan feasts. Carnival celebrations have two faces, the reason which made these feasts as a challenge to authority and even the church. This is because during carnival world life becomes free from all regulations that exist in normal life and so the participants have the chance to reject the faults in society transgressing the laws and established norms.

**ARTICLE INFO**

**Received**  
**Accepted**

***Keywords***

**Origins**

**Carnivalization**

**Introduction:**

This research will shed light here on the early beginnings of the carnival as a public ceremony in which everything turns upside down, and the sources from which Mikhail Bakhtin derives his theory of carnivalization. Bakhtin builds his theory on ancient celebrations which extend to late antiquity. Bakhtin discusses the historical origins of the Roman, Greek, and Egyptian festivals to illustrate that carnival celebrations go back to ancient pagan festivals. The influence of these festivities is immense in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. They were characterized by their popularity and so they were imitated by all people. The importance of the pagan festivities obligated the church to Christianize these celebrations to keep its followers away from these pagan feasts. Carnival celebrations have two faces, the reason which made these feasts as a challenge to authority and even the church. This is because during carnival world life becomes free from all regulations that exist in normal life and so the participants have the chance to reject the faults in society transgressing the laws and established norms. All people were allowed celebrate because it was a festive time which was protected by freedom and equality. In the Renaissance carnival, women were active participants and constituted a threat to the State which appeared in different aspects; social, religious, and political aspects. Bakhtin proves that carnival with its different origins and practices was an image of society which revealed the weaknesses of official life and even the religious cults were subjected to criticisms.

Carnival is a public event, often held in public, where everyone can take part in competitions, wear unusual clothes, eat, and drink. It is the opposite of everything normal. Mikhail Bakhtin describes it as "...the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change and renewal" (Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 10). This celebration is accompanied by liberation from official rules that are followed in usual life. Freedom dominates the carnival world; every one acts without the restrictions of the official life.

Carnival with its comic shows and competitions is different from official celebrations. Official feasts are serious, formal occasions in which certain rules are followed. They are occasions in which people act as if they were in an ordinary life. In official feasts inequality is the dominating feature but in carnival times everyone is considered equal. Mikhail Bakhtin writes "...it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions" (Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 10). In the carnival life people behave in an uncontrolled way; because there are no established norms or upper and lower classes that exist in usual life, only a state of chaos. In carnivals everything is the opposite, discipline is violated, order is disrespected, disorder becomes the rule, and ordinary people rule their kings and kings become beggars as Mikhail Bakhtin writes: "mock crowning and subsequent decrowning of the carnival king" (Bakhtin, *Problems*, 124). So carnival gives an unusual image of the world. It is an occasion which insults everything that is holy and respectable in usual life.

These primitive celebrations create a second life for people to live without restrictions, only the laws of carnival that are followed. The phenomenon of a topsy-turvy world is the dominating feature of these carnivals. Slaves and beggars act freely and their rulers serve them, participants use masks and men dressed as animal or women, as it is a time of doing what is forbidden in their ordinary life. Thus these carnivals were used as tools which criticize the bad sides in society through giving its participants the freedom to say what they could not in their normal life.

Ancient People organized carnivals to celebrate or to drive bad omens out of their life. Carnivalization is a way of restoring psychological balance to the oppressed classes in these societies. Ancient societies were built on tribal structure before the appearance of the state or the city states. Carnivalization is a natural behavior as it is related to the oppressive nature of these early societies. Carnivals were the main art, very similar to theatre today, since theatre brings pity and relief, so did carnivalization.

In earliest civilizations, daily activities were filled with the agricultural rituals, so there was no need for carnival. People celebrated everything in a sacred manner like planting and harvesting fields. Sacred manner means that these religious celebrations and rituals were performed through restrict religious rules which do not allow any margin of freedom or carnivalization. Carnivalization means the freedom of speech in some way or another and this freedom of speech may compromise the sacredness of these celebrations and so endanger

the status of the ruler. In ancient times, people's celebrations were associated with the changing cycles of the moon, sun, seasons, climate change, and life and death cycles.

### **Historical Origins:**

Carnival has a long history. People performed carnivals since ancient times. Etymologically there are many theories about the derivation of the word carnival. Carnival is related to Christianity as it occurs just before the feast of Lent<sup>1</sup>. Thus first theory supposes that the word carnival is derived from the Latin word *caro-carnis* which means meat and this Latin word is linked to the Italian expression *carne levamen* and *carnelevare* which means to remove meat. Ivan Lozica writes:

According to Christian tradition, the word *carnival* derives from the Latin *caro - carnis* = meat (in the 13th century in Germany and France). The term for the last Sunday before the Lenten fast, meatless Sunday (*dominica carnis privii*) was followed by *carne levamen* and *carnelevare* (meaning to lift away, or remove meat) (77).

Another etymology supposes that the word carnival comes from the Latin word *carne vale* which means goodbye meat. Ivan Lozica also writes: "As early as in 1611, the Spaniard, Sebastián de Covarrubias, tried to establish direct Latin etymology from *carne vale* = good-bye meat"(77).

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<sup>1</sup> The feast of Lent is a part of the Christian religion in which Christians stop eating meat for forty days. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Lent>. 03-10-2020.

However, there are two pagan etymologies about the derivation of the word carnival. The first etymology sees that it is derived from the Latin expression *carnem avalere* which means to swallow meat. The second etymology claims that the word carnival comes from the Latin phrase *carrus navalis* or *currus navalis* which refers to the ancient Babylonian Ship of Fools<sup>2</sup> or the Ship of Isis, which was related to *Isidis Navigium*<sup>3</sup>, the ancient Roman festival. Ivan Lozica also writes:

However, the international word *carnival* also conceals two possible pagan etymological layers. One possibility is genesis from the Latin *carnem avalere* (to swallow meat), while the second is from *carrus navalis* or *currus navalis* (a boat on wheels). Boats on wheels used to be part of the Spring festivities dedicated to the goddess Isis (*Isidis Navigium*) and the dissipated Roman Saturnalia, while the Saturnalia, the Dionysian rituals and other ancient Spring ceremonies were precursors of Carnival (77).

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<sup>2</sup> Ship of Fools was a boat on wheels which was pulled by participants during carnival festivities celebrating the return of the Spring. [https://www.jstor.org/stable/42710886?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/42710886?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents). 03-10-2020.

<sup>3</sup> *Isidis Navigium* was an annual Roman religious ceremony in honor of the Egyptian goddess Isis, celebrated the end of the winter season announcing the beginning of the spring and the sailing season on March. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Navigium\\_Isidis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Navigium_Isidis). 03-10-2020.

Carnival was related to the ceremonies which celebrated the end of the winter season and the beginning of the spring, and these ceremonies were influenced by the Egyptian Goddess Isis. Saturnalian and Dionysian rites were early carnivals, thus it seems that the carnival had its roots in ancient days of the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans.

*Isidis Navigium* was an ancient Roman religious festival that brought together Egyptian and Roman traditions. David Frankfurter writes: "...we have a festival that combines Egyptian elements, Greek elements and new elements"<sup>4</sup>(687). People celebrated this festival by bringing the statues of Isis and various gods from temples in a cheerful procession, and launched a ship dedicated to Isis filled with offerings for her to start the new sailing season announcing the end of winter and its storms and the beginning of spring. David Frankfurter also writes "...the symbolic ship of Isis was sent into the open sea, inaugurating the new maritime season"(687). It was a colorful celebration where worshippers carried lanterns, houses and streets were decorated. So this ceremony was of Greek origin because using lanterns was borrowed from Greek mystery- cult<sup>5</sup> tradition as David Frankfurter also

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<sup>4</sup> New elements means Roman and Medieval elements.

<https://the-avocado.org/2018/03/05/navigium-isidis-an-ancient-religious-festival/>.  
03-10-2020.

<sup>5</sup> Greek mystery- cult is the mystery religion which was the most influential religion after Christ,

and it was called mystery because it involved secret ceremonies known only by the initiators of

this religion. Its followers believed in the cycles of death and rebirth, according to them life is

renewed in spring and died in fall.

indicates "The *vannus*... was apparently borrowed from Greek mystery-cult tradition" (687).

The Roman festival *Isidis Navigium* goes back to different origins. There are many interpretations that shed light on the origins of this celebration. Reinhold Merkelbach identified the *Navigium* celebration with the Egyptian *Kikellia*-festival<sup>6</sup> which was celebrated at the end of December so it was identified with the Egyptian Osiris-festival<sup>7</sup>. But this interpretation was refused by Françoise Dunand, and John Gwyn Griffiths as they saw that the Egyptian *Kikellia*-festival was celebrated at the end of December and it was a festival of sadness on the death of Osiris, whereas the *Navigium* celebration was celebrated in March and it was a festival of joy which celebrated the winter solstice<sup>8</sup>

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<https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/501560/7-greco-roman-mystery-cults-you-should-know>.

2-10-2020.

<sup>6</sup> *Kikellia*-festival was a festival that was held in the 3rd and 4th centuries in 25 December, and

this festival celebrated the birth of Horus, the son of Isis and Osiris. Also, it was a festival

which celebrated Osiris's victory over death.

[https://books.google.com.eg/books?id=tm-  
auVKJqYIC&pg=PA53&lpg=PA53&dq=kikellia-](https://books.google.com.eg/books?id=tm-<br/>auVKJqYIC&pg=PA53&lpg=PA53&dq=kikellia-)

02-10-2020.

<sup>7</sup> Osiris-festival was a celebration which combined holy rituals on honor of the death of Osiris

as well as singing and dancing to celebrate his rebirth. It was held in the 4th and 5th centuries

in December 25 or 28 or 29.

[https://books.google.com.eg/books?id=Iaqe9CG\\_s6cC&pg=PA103&dq=kikellia-](https://books.google.com.eg/books?id=Iaqe9CG_s6cC&pg=PA103&dq=kikellia-)

03-10-2020.

<sup>8</sup> Winter solstice is a festival that celebrates the beginning of the winter season.

This festival

and the increasing of light. Another interpretation sees that this celebration was a completely invented tradition in the Hellenistic age<sup>9</sup> (Conf., Frankfurter, 687-688).

During the Hellenistic age, the Egyptian goddess Isis was worshipped by the Greeks and Egyptians. Also, the goddess Isis was the goddess of fertility and the Queen of Heaven whose religious beliefs and practices had a great influence on the Romans and was worshipped by pagans. In the first century BCE, her cult became a part of Roman religion and had a great impact on festivals such as the *Isidis Navigium* and other Greco-Roman celebrations. In the third century the goddess Isis was worshipped as a “mistress of seafaring” who granted safety for seafarers, so the *Isidis Navigium* celebrated her influence over the sea. Francoise Dunand and John Gwyn Griffiths argue that:

If the *Navigium* was a festival of Greek origin or a new invented festival of the Hellenistic period, it must come from the times when Isis was established as “mistress of

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occurs when the sun is low in the sky, thus that day becomes the fewest daylight hours of the year and the longest night of the year. After the shortest day, the days get longer and the nights get shorter . <https://www.rmg.co.uk/discover/explore/when-winter-solstice>. 03-10-2020.

<sup>9</sup> Hellenistic age refers to the period between the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BCE and the Roman conquest of Egypt in 30 BCE. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Hellenistic-Age>. 29-09-2020.

seafaring”, as she was called in her aretalogy of Kyme<sup>10</sup>, which may date back to the 3rd cent. BCE (?). First attestations of the *Navigium* itself are not earlier than the 1st cent. CE. (Qtd in Frankfurter, 688).

Thus the roots of this annual Roman festival went back to Greek-mystery. Also, the rituals of this festival were dedicated to the Egyptian goddess Isis whose cult extended to Greece and Rome and is still worshipped by pagans.

### **Socratic Dialogue:**

Bakhtin took his theory of carnivalization from Socrates and other Greek philosophers. Socratic dialogue was a kind of memoir that spread in antiquity. Plato, Xenophon, Antisthenes, Aeschines, Phaedo, Euclid were among its representatives, although only the works of Plato, Xenophon had retained. This memoir genre was the recollections of Socrates’s conversations with his students, and it broke away from the limitations of history, retaining the Socrates method of dialogically revealing truth (Kristeva, 80-81). Socratic dialogue was among the antique carnivalized literature; because it reflected the influence of carnival on literature as Raman Selden and others write: "The earliest

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<sup>10</sup> Aretalogy of Kyme is a kind of praises, hymns, liturgies on honor of Isis worship which goes

back to the 2nd century BCE as the goddess Isis was worshipped by the Greeks, and Egyptian.

Some of these aretalogies are composed in Greek language, and the others in Egyptian

language. <https://isiopolis.com/2014/11/30/i-am-isis-the-goddess-her-aretalogies/>. 2-10-2020.

carnivalized literary forms are the Socratic dialogue and the Menippean satire"(41). According to Paul Sullivan and others, Bakhtin argues that:"the most inquisitive and challenging Socratic dialogues are rooted in ancient, medieval traditions of carnival"(329).In carnival time normal life was suspended including distances among people caused by society; there were no barriers as equality was the prevailing feature and so there was no fear as authority was destroyed, and the laughing aspect of everything was disclosed (Bakhtin, *Problems*, 130). Thus, Bakhtin's interpretation of the Socratic dialogue was associated with authority, carnival, and knowledge as Paul Sullivan and others also comment:"From his Socratic reading, we argue that Bakhtin develops an epistemology that links authority, carnival and knowledge"(326). Bakhtin argues that Socrates presented the carnivalesque world in his dialogue as he refused any tendency to closure or permanence; because the central figure of the Socratic dialogue was its combining of the opposites, for example, its folkloristic debate between life and death. This opposition led to change and to a state of familiarization which included everything and so all that was individual and limited was refused as Bakhtin explains:

The carnivalistic base of the Socratic dialogue, despite its very complicated form and philosophical depth, is beyond any doubt. Folk-carnival "debates" between life and death, darkness and light, winter and summer, etc., permeated with the pathos of change and the joyful relativity of all things, debates which did not permit thought to stop and

congeal in one-sided seriousness or in a stupid fetish for definition or singleness of meaning-all this lay at the base of the original core of the genre (Bakhtin, *Problems*, 132).

Thus Socrates was similar to Bakhtin in disclaiming the individual society or restricted beliefs or ideas. Rather, they asserted the world which represented all people, and other thoughts and perspectives (Sharp, 97). According to James P. Zappen, Bakhtin asserts that "Socratic dialogue is not, therefore... a rhetorical genre but a carnivalesque genre"(Zappen, Socrates, 74).This is because the Socratic dialogue represented aspects of real life and human thoughts as these dialogues" bring the world closer and familiarize it in order to investigate it fearlessly and freely (Bakhtin, *Dialogic*, 25).

### **Menippean Satire:**

Menippean satire is a genre and a literary device which was used to change the social status that was not acceptable. Jonathan Swift<sup>11</sup> writes:"Satire has been defined as work or manner that blends a

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<sup>11</sup> Jonathan Swift was an Irish author and satirist, and he was known as the foremost prose

satirist in the history of English literature. He was the author of A Tale Of A Tub , Gulliver's

Travels , and A Modest Proposal .He was influenced by the Restoration writers; John Wilmot

and Samuel Butler and the Renaissance poets; John Donne and Sir Philip Sidney. In the

Augustan Age, his poetic style was different because it introduced new and effective ideas. His

writings were characterized by mocking the bad sides in society, and they were of great

influence on the reader, for example, his work A Tale Of A Tub mocked the corruptions in

ensorius attitude with humor and wit for improving human institutions or humanity"(9).Satirists use laughter, exaggeration, irony as tools to mock a social custom or tradition, or a particular leader to change the bad sides of society. There are two kinds of satire; formal and indirect satires. The formal satire includes Juvenalian<sup>12</sup> satire and Horatian<sup>13</sup>

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religion, learning, and the manner of worship. So his works were disapproved by the Church of

England. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/jonathan-swift>. 04-10-2020.

<sup>12</sup> Juvenal was a Roman satiric poet who lived under the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian

(81-96 AD) till the Roman emperor Hadrian(117-138 AD).He wrote sixteen satirical poems

known as the *Satires* divided into five books in the late 1<sup>st</sup> and early 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD. His

Satires included all aspects of real life in Rome and they were devoted to criticize the

corruption of Roman society and the stupidity and brutality of mankind. These *Satires* were

considered threats to the Roman society because they revealed Rome's vices to the reader.

<https://www.thoughtco.com/juvenal-roman-satirist-119363>.

[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The\\_Satires\\_of\\_Juvenal](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Satires_of_Juvenal). 04-10-2020.

<sup>13</sup> Horace was a Roman lyric poet and satirist in the time of Augustus (27 BC-14 AD), the

Roman emperor who ruled Rome after the assassination of Julius Caesar. Horace was

concerned with depicting human foibles in literary genres such as epodes, satires and epistles,

and lyrics, and his satires made him one of the great poetic talents in the Augustan age. Food

was the natural focus of Horace's satires but the essence of his satires was the inner self-

sufficiency and the search for a happy life. He used light mockery to criticize the faults and the

weak aspects of everyone to change these vices. Among his works; the *Satires* in 35 BC and

satire. Juvenalian satire is a dark satire and more roughly which mocks the faults of society in a tough way. Swift also writes: "Juvenalian satire is quite bitter and angry"(9). Another kind of satire is Horatian satire which is a comic satire and uses light mockery in depicting the problem, William Harmon and Hugh Holman write "Horatian satire is more gentle, using laughter to try to change the situation"(Qtd in Swift, 9). Menippean satire is a kind of indirect satire which can be comic and light, and sometimes dark and rough satire, William Harmon and Hugh Holman also write: "There are several forms of indirect satire, the principle one being Menippean"(Qtd in Swift, 9). Satire makes a kind of psychological balance to the reader which enables him to be aware of himself and his world through living in an atmosphere of freedom away from official rules or restrictions of the official life. Menippean satire is a kind of serio-comical literature that began in antiquity. The word satire comes from the Latin *satire* associated with *satyr*, the wild half-man in Greek mythology. According to Emanuel J. Mickel, Kirk Freudenburg and others note that:

the term satire referring to a poetic form and the verb satirize ('to satirize') have little to do with one another. Whereas satire comes from Latin *satura* , satirize in Greek

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they were published in two books, the *Epodes* in 29 BC and the *Epistles* in 20 BC. He was

best Known for his *Odes*, which celebrated common events.

[https://www.ancient-literature.com/rome\\_horace.html](https://www.ancient-literature.com/rome_horace.html).

<https://poets.org/poet/horace>. 04-10 2020.

is related to satyr, the wild half-man, half-goat figure in Greek mythology (Mickel,3).

There are three interpretations of the word *satura* .It is derived from fruits offerings to the gods. Also, it is related to *prosimetrum*, a form of literature which combines both prose and verse, and is written to praise or to blame important personalities. The third derivation is connected with M. Terentius Varro, the ancient Roman scholar. According to Emanuel J. Mickel, Diomedes, the Greek hero in the Trojan War writes:

Diomedes gives three other possible meanings and derivations for *satura*, one involving a platter of mixed fruits given in offering to the gods...This second definition has nothing to do with the attitude of satirizing something. Rather it refers to a religious offering, an act of piety, a platter not only of a variety of fruits but of first fruits. This has been widely understood as a reference to the form of *satura* called *prosimetrum* where the variety is seen in the medley of verse and prose. In his third definition Diomedes returns to a gastronomic<sup>14</sup> analogy drawn from Varro that might seem ready-made from the gastronomic interests some *saturae* had shown (Mickel, 3).

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<sup>14</sup> Gastronomic analogy means various foods. <https://educalingo.com/en/dic-en/gastronomic>.  
04-10-2020.

This means that the dominant feature of this literary genre is its style based on variety which combines parodies, high and low languages, poetry and prose. Thus carnivalization prepares the way for literature to depict opposites as it abuses and praises, at the same time, to reveal the status of society through a mixture of different styles and languages.

Menippean satire took its name from Menippus, the Greek Cynic of Gadara who lived in the third century BCE as David Sandner writes:

The genre took its name from the philosopher Menippus of Gadara (third century B.C.) who fashioned it into its classical form, although the term itself as signifying a specific genre was first introduced by the Roman scholar Varro (first century B.C.), who called his satires “*saturae menippeae*”(117).

This literary genre was developed by the philosopher Menippus whose works were characterized by the mixture of prose and verse and have a direct influence on Roman writers. M. Terentius Varro was the first to introduce this genre to Rome and his Menippean satires were an imitation of the writings of Menippus. Joel C. Relihan writes "That uniquely Roman word in Varro's title, *Saturae*, reflects only the meaning "medley"; and the most characteristic mixture within the *Menippeans*, that of prose and verse, is owed directly to the influence of the Greek Menippus"(Relihan, Origin, 228-229). Yet, the genre arose much earlier; its first representative was Antisthenes, a pupil of

Socrates and a writer of Socratic dialogues. Heraclides Ponticus also wrote Menippean satire. The Greek philosopher Bion of Borysthenes contributed to this genre in the third century (Sandner, 117). Thus the roots of Menippean satire are the same roots of the carnival. Both activities are based on medley, mixture or variety. Menippean satire is based on prose and verse in a kind of what we call pastiche today which writers of postmodernists' novels use today. The importance of looking into the origins of satire comes from that it also sheds light on the origins of carnival. Satire also is used as a carnivalized tool; Menippean satire uses laughter, exaggeration, irony to criticize social customs or traditions. So, carnival takes its roots in Menippean satire in some way or another through the different satiric tools Menippus used in his poems.

The nature of the carnival and its characteristics were absorbed in Menippean satire; seriousness is violated and the official authority is destroyed by laughter which aims at reflecting current social problems. According to Thomas Eric Marshall McLuhan, Bakhtin points out that "there are elements of the carnival in every Menippean satire" (40). Carnival is based on oppositions; it mocks and at the same time praises, so parody, mockery, and debasement are the means of expression in such celebrations as Joel C. Relihan writes: "Menippean satire is most readily defined by its combination of prose and verse" (Relihan, History, 20). Menippean satire is characterized by a mixture of

different styles, it uses the sublime<sup>15</sup> style and at the same time the vulgarity of street slang. It is characterized by mingling prose with verse to criticize human flaws and weaknesses. Thomas A. Schmitz comments: "this is why texts such as Senecas (65 CE) *Apocolocyntosis*, Petronius's (first century CE) *Satyrical* or, from late antiquity, Boethius's (480-524) *Consolatio Philosophiae* are called Menippean satires"(74). These works are characterized by melding prose with poetical lines in different meters so they are Menippean satires. For example, the *Satyrical* of Petronius Arbiter reflected the features of Menippean satire as a carnivalesque genre through its comical aspect, its crude naturalism which presents food, bodily functions, and sex in a vulgar language. Ignoring usual norms is one of its features through the continuous depiction of vulgarity and tastelessness from beginning to end. The reversal image of the world during carnival time is prominent in this work through the description of the traditions of the city of Croton which express the phenomena of a turned upside down world. Also, it combines different styles from the sublime Roman epic to the street language. There are different metrical forms in the prose narrative like novellas and short stories (Conf., Schmitz, 74-75).

Menippean satire as a genre, was more closely associated with the carnival world than the Socratic dialogue because of the significant

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<sup>15</sup> The idea of the sublime is related to the Roman-Greek, Longinus and it promotes the spirit of

the reader as it arouses the elevated feeling.

[https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Sublime\\_\(philosophy\)](https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Sublime_(philosophy)). 04-10-2020.

influence of carnivalized folklore (Bakhtin, *Problems*, 112).As a result, it became "one of the main carriers and channels for the carnival sense of the world in literature, and remains so to the present day"(Bakhtin, *Problems*, 113).At this point, Menippean satire as a literary genre represented a struggle against the “official” culture as Charles Edward Gobin writes:"This phenomenon manifests itself in the presence of works that subvert through parody the dominant “official” culture"(17).Bakhtin argues that Menippean satire extended to antiquity, infiltrating and carnivalizing Christian literature during the Middle Ages and most literature during the Renaissance, and this genre continued to develop through ages and survived to the present as Bakhtin states:"Menippean satire exercised a very great influence on old Christian literature ...and on Byzantine literature...it also continued its development into the post-classical epochs: into the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and Reformation, and modern times"(Bakhtin,*Problems*,113).Thus, this carnivalized genre reflected the features of carnival in European literature, according to Bettina Fischer, "Bakhtin sees the Menippea as the genre that has had the greatest carnivalistic influence on European literature"(42). Bakhtin, in illustrating the influence of the Menippean satire on literature, tried to counter an assertion that the Menippean satire was purely a literary genre which came as a result of the disintegration of the Socratic dialogue, "since its roots reach *directly* back into carnivalized folklore"(Bakhtin, *Problems*, 112).

### **Roman Saturnalia :**

Roman Saturnalia was a Roman festival that extended to remote antiquity. This celebration was held before the winter solstice and December seventeenth was its original day and it was officially celebrated in 217 B.C. Giuseppe Pucci writes "It fell near the winter solstice, and when the celebration was officially organized in 217 B.C., it was held only on December 17"(Qtd in Garner, 18-19).The time of this festival was extended from three to seven days until this celebration was neglected in the fifth century A.D. as J. P. V. D. Balsdon, an English ancient historian and author writes: "After Augustus' death, observation slowly increased to seven days, and fluctuated between three and seven days in length until the festival was disbanded in the fifth century" (Qtd in Garner, 19).

Saturn was an ancient Roman god who was associated with agriculture and who ruled Latium, the region in which the city of Rome was founded during the Golden Age<sup>16</sup>. Jennie M. Churco writes: "The

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<sup>16</sup> Golden Age is the good and noble age where there was no need for laws or rulers because

immortality was absent. It is the first of the five ages; the Silver, the Bronze, the Heroic, and

the Iron age. It refers to the era of prosperity, stability, peace, and satisfaction. The term comes

from Greek mythology as it is originated from early Greek and Roman poets, who used this

term to refer to a period of harmony and innocence. It is associated with Hesiod, the ancient

Greek poet, and especially, his poem *Works and Days* around 700 B.C. Those who lived in

the Golden Age was ruled by Kronos, the leader of Titans, the former gods in Greek

mythology until he was overthrown by his son Zeus.

festival of the Saturnalia was celebrated in honor of the old god of agriculture, Saturn, who was said to have brought the Golden Age to Latium"(25). It was a Roman religious festival that its participants began their celebration with offering the sacrifices at the ancient temple of Saturn. H.H. Scullard writes: "At this temple the Saturnalia opened with a great sacrifice, at which senators and knights wore their togas" (206).

Because Saturnalia was one of Roman religious festivals, it shared the characteristics of these religious celebrations. Romans were granted a holiday which enabled them to relax and enjoy Saturnalia. Also, the timing of the festival allowed Romans to spend more days celebrating the feast because of the reduction of the agricultural work at this time of the year. The festival of Saturnalia gave its celebrants a chance to take rest of the normal life with all its burdens. Rachel L. Garner writes: "The festival focused on agriculture and reflected many of the traits of its god. The holiday allowed Romans to relax ...The timing of the festival was also an important influence on its celebration"(25).So, the Saturnalia shared the characteristics of Roman religious festivals in reflecting the agricultural and religious rituals and in granting Romans a license for temporary relaxation from the usual norms during this ceremony.

Etymologically Saturn was identified with different origins. M. Terentius Varro, the Roman scholar offered an etymological explanation of Saturn's name and posited that Saturn was associated

with agriculture and the word Saturn was derived from *sero* or *satum* which means “to sow”. According to Rachel L. Garner, M. Terentius Varro and his followers concluded that: "Saturn's name derived from *sero* or *satum* (to sow) and therefore the god was agricultural and presided over sowing"(Garner, 26). Marcus Tullius Cicero, the Roman writer indicated that Saturn's name was derived from *satur* or *saturare* which means “to saturate or fill”. According to Rachel L. Garner, Marcus Tullius Cicero supposed that:"Saturn came from *satur* or *saturare* (to saturate or fill) and referred to Saturn's reign over times when men had the opportunity to completely indulge themselves in pleasure"(Garner, 26-27).

There were other interpretations that shed light on the origins of Saturn assuming that Saturn had Italian and Grecian origins. There was an interpretation which indicates that Saturn was of Italian origins as it posits that Saturn was originated in Etruria, ancient country in central Italy. H.H. Scullard also writes:"some scholars therefore have looked to Etruria for the origin of his name"(206). This opinion supposed that Saturn was the Etruscan god *Sarte*, a god associated with the dead. H. J. Rose posited that: "Saturn may be an Etruscan god" (Qtd in Garner, 27). Another explanation assumes that Saturn was identified with the Greek god Kronos and that Saturn's worship was revived into Roman worship by the Greeks after the transition of the Greek god Kronos to Rome. E. O. James writes:"Saturn was identified with Kronos because after being deposed by Zeus, the Greek god wandered to Italy, perhaps

by way of Etruria, and [was] welcomed in Rome by Janus"(Qtd in Garner, 28).

The historical roots of Saturn remain vague because the above suppositions which are related to different sources; Roman, Grecian, and Italian sources are debatable opinions. But all of them assert the fact that the festival of the Saturnalia was filled with the practices which reflected the spirit of carnival. The reign of Saturn during the Golden age gave Romans the chance to live in a state of inversion and so the idea of a world turned upside down influenced on their celebration of the Saturnalia. Rachel L. Garner also writes:"The Saturnalia became a festival of inversion because of its connection with the Golden Age"(46).The festival of Saturnalia was a cheerful festival, Romans were granted a temporary freedom which allowed them to drink, eat, wear unusual clothes, exchange gifts, and decorate their homes with candles. Also, Romans were allowed to gamble in public during this celebration, although gambling was forbidden during other ceremonies. Moreover, the atmosphere during this ceremony was chaotic; the reversal of the norm was the dominant feature during the Saturnalia. The freedom of speech was permitted and even slaves were allowed to speak freely in front of their masters as Luke Roman writes:

During the Saturnalia, Romans exchanged gifts, feasted, drank, wore leisure suits instead of the toga, and gambled. Slaves were allowed freedom of speech and dined before their masters; everyone wore the *pilleus*, a cap normally worn by freed slaves (122).

During carnival time, the world is turned upside down because the elements of inversion are the rule throughout this celebration. The festival of Saturnalia reflected the most important characteristics of carnival as during this Roman celebration roles are inverted; slaves became rulers and they were served by their masters. Slaves were allowed to act freely without punishment. During this temporary freedom, slaves could disobey their rulers and they could say whatever they wanted without restrictions. There were no limitations because moral restrictions were ceased. Also, popularity and familiarity made all people equal through removing class distinctions and wearing similar dress. All people were allowed to share in public activities, especially meals. Moreover, participants during these celebrations created a second life for themselves which undermined the laws of the official life only the laws of the carnival ruled their unacceptable public behavior. They exploited these festivals to express themselves freely under the protection of the carnival rules which violated the discipline and paved the way for the participants to criticize the bad sides of life in order to change it. Thus the festival of Saturnalia was a carnival which granted its participants the opportunity to live in a world where they could express themselves and mock the faults of the official life without fear or punishment. People used these ceremonies as tools in order to shed light on the weaknesses of their societies(Garner 63-64).

### **Dionysian Rituals:**

Dionysos was the most important god to the Greeks in the fifth century BCE. But his name was known from the second millennium BC (2000-1001), the late period of Bronze Age. Cornelia Isler-Kerényi writes: "is one of the oldest gods, since he is named on the tablets from Pylos and Chania in the second millennium BCE "(5) .He was the god of wine, fertility, ecstasy, dance, fun and life. Dionysos was known by many names in different civilizations. Timothy Freke writes: "In Egypt he was Osiris, in Greece Dionysos, in Asia Minor Attis, in Syria Adonis, in Italy Bacchus, in Persia Mithras. Fundamentally all these godmen are the same mythical being" (4).

Etymologically, Dionysos means the son of Zeus, the son of gods, and god of the sky, weather, fate and law. The first half Dio, is Greek and is associated with Zeus, but the last part of the name is vague. Walter Burkert writes:

The name once again is a conundrum. The first element of Dionysos-also found as Deunysos, Zonnysos -must certainly contain the name Zeus, and this is how it was construed in antiquity: Dios Dionysos, Zeus' son Dionysos. The second element, however, remains impenetrable, even though the meaning of son has been repeatedly postulated (Qtd in Ahye, 41).

Another interpretation of Dionysos's name is a psychological metaphor which supposes that Dionysos means god of Nysa, an earthy paradise. Michael K. Stamper writes: "It makes for a nice psychological metaphor: Dionysos comes from that place in our psyche

which is paradise— and that paradise is paradoxically both everywhere (or at least ten places) and nowhere"(63). The element of fertility, according to Herodotus, the ancient Greek historian, is one of the similarities between the Egyptian god Osiris and Dionysos. Herodotus sees these similarities in phallic worship which was imported into Greece as Dionysian rites, so he describes Dionysos as a god of fertility. According to Michael K. Stamper, Herodotus argues that:" the cult of Osiris was imported to Greece from Egypt and became the cult of Dionysos. In emphasizing phallic worship as a point of similarity between the two cults, Herodotus describes Dionysos as a fertility god"(Stamper, 65-66).

The Greek cult of Dionysos was affected by Greek mythology because of its connection with Orin, the giant huntsman in Greek mythology and his dog, Sirius. It was associated with the tradition of gathering honey, and wine which coincided with the rising of Nile, Sirius, and the summer solstice and this tradition went back to the second or third millennium BCE. The cult of wine was the original rite of Dionysos and it had roots in Egypt, Crete, and Greece before Dionysos. According to Michael K. Stamper, Carl Kerényi outlines:"a culture/religion based on the gathering of honey, the brewing of mead, and the astrological significance of the constellation Orion, and his dog, Sirius. This tradition pre-dates Dionysos and wine, and could be found in Crete, Egypt and parts of Greece" (Stamper, 83). Also, the Greeks were influenced by the ecstatic and orgiastic cults which were associated with the god of Sabazios in Thrace and Phrygia in Anatolia,

Asia. People celebrated the god of Sabazios spending their festival dancing, singing, wearing strange dress, and drinking wine. Erwin Rohde writes:

It was in frantic, whirling, headlong eddies and dance-circles that these inspired companies danced over the mountain slopes. They were mostly women who whirled round in these circular dances till the point of exhaustion was reached; they were strangely dressed; they wore *bassarai*, long flowing garments, as it seems, stitched together out of fox-skins; over these were doeskins, and they even had horns fixed to their ears (Qtd in Stamper,69).

Thus the historical roots and the nature of the cult of Dionysos are uncertain because there are different theories which suppose different interpretations about this Greek celebration. But this Greek cult was filled with the spirit of carnival such as the festival of Saturnalia as it was a festival that reflected features of the carnival and shared its characteristics. It was an annual festival which allowed the celebrants the chance to feast, dance, relax, wear masks, and drink wine. This festival reflected the idea of inversion because all the participants lived in a state of chaos which granted them temporary freedom. They spent their celebration playing music, carrying bread and water and doing forbidden things in an uncontrolled way. It was a time which gave its participants the right to act and live without fear to escape from social restrictions. Liberty during these celebrations gave

people a kind of psychological balance because roles were inverted and all participants enjoyed equality. Those who were marginalized in Greek society, carnival granted them a chance to live in a new life for a temporary time.

### **Medieval Carnival:**

During the earliest civilizations daily activities were identified with religious rituals. People celebrated everything in a sacred manner which was controlled by restrict religious rules that did not allow any kind of freedom ,for example, Planting and harvesting fields expressed people's own rites in celebrating the spring and autumn seasons. Before Christianity, carnival was a time which granted its participants the time to get rest of the tensions of life as they used to create a new life for themselves which expressed their own rituals. Carnival was associated with the changing cycles of nature. There were many occasions which were linked with the changing cycles of the moon, sun, and stars, climate change, and the cycles of life and death. These celebrations of natural cycles reflected people's respect and fear of nature. Louise Marguerite Leclair writes: "The carnival of pre-industrial, pre-Christian times comprised rituals and festivals that expressed both honour and fear of the natural cycles of life and death" (30). In the carnivals of early Christianity, humor was rejected by the authority. During the declining of the Roman Empire people used festivals to mock the rulers to draw attention to their vices. Louise Marguerite Leclair also writes: "At the time of the decline of the Roman Empire, between AD 100 and AD 300, the satirization of a returning conqueror was still an integral

element of the public celebration greeting his return"(29-30).So these ceremonies gave its participants the chance to celebrate and laugh at figures of authority.

During Christian feudalism, carnival was used as a tool to criticize the church and feudal rulers in temporary security. Robert Muchembled writes: "A period of license, Carnival loosed all human passions" (Qtd in Leclair, 30). In the carnivals, celebrants could mask themselves and mock the authority because there was no fear or restrictions, only a temporary freedom which was granted by the carnival. According to Jesus Marten-Barbero, Mikhail M. Bakhtin sees that laughter "is a victory over fear" (Qtd in Martin-Barbero, 66). During these festivals, laughter was not only for pleasure but it was a tool which rejected the established norms in order to reveal the weaknesses of society. Jesus Martin-Barbero writes: "In the carnival, laughter is not just entertainment and pleasure, but an expression of opposition and challenge to the seriousness of the official world with its ascetic penance for sin and its identification of value with higher things"(66). During these ceremonies, celebrants poked fun at official authority to shed light on social illnesses trying to find solutions to these faults. Thus carnival was a place to have fun and to make fun of the faults of rulers without fear.

Carnival is related to Christianity as it begins just before the Christian feast, Lent. Also, it has its roots in the Julian calendar, and its duration is defined by the Christian feast, Easter. Ivan Lozica also writes "Carnival is conditioned by Lent...Carnival is still firmly rooted

in the calendar, and its duration is defined precisely by the date of the greatest Christian feast, Easter"(79). The Lenten feast is a period of fasting which precedes the Christian feast, Easter and fast lasts for forty days. This fasting period leads to the renewal of the soul by cleaning it from sin to prepare it before Easter feast. In western churches the day which precedes fasting is called Shrove Tuesday, it is a day of confession of sins to clean the soul and prepare it for lent, and it is also a day of celebration as it the last feast before fasting. The fast begins on Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent in the Roman Catholic liturgical calendar, and ends on Holy Saturday, the day before Easter Sunday. In Eastern churches the fast begins two days earlier than Western Christians. The fast begins on Clean Monday, the first day of Great Lent which falls on the seventh week before Easter Sunday, and ends on the Friday; nine days before Easter. In this Great Lent fast that lasts for 40 days, Saturdays and Sundays are excluded fast days because they coincide with the celebration of Christ's Resurrection. (Conf., Lozica, 79-80)

The Roman festivals with their rites and customs affected the Christian feasts and were imitated by the Christians from remote antiquity, for example, the Roman festival Saturnalia was followed by two celebrations; Natalis Invicti and Kalendas of January, and these feasts had influenced the Christian celebrations. Jennie M. Churco writes: "In later Roman times it was immediately followed by the festival in honor of the sun god, which was called Natalis Invicti. After Natalis Invicti came the festivities of the Kalends of January"(25). The

Christians were influenced by these pagan festivities because of their wide popularity but the early Church fathers prevented them from participating in these celebrations. Jennie M. Churco also writes: "Christmas was deliberately set on the date of *Natalis Invicti*, the culmination of the Saturnalia festivities, to replace the licentious Saturnalia"(25).

### **Natalis Invicti:**

*Natalis Invicti* is the Roman festival *Sol Invictus*<sup>17</sup> which celebrated the sun god and the winter solstice. Peter Bellone writes: "Jesus was born on December 25, which also happens to be the day that pagans would celebrated the birth of their gods, Mithras and Saturn, as well as the festival of *natalis Invicti* (Birth of the Unconquerable (Sun))"(71). *Natalis Invicti* is a pagan festival which was originated in Persia in the honor of Mithra, the pagan Christ whose worship was of evident relationship to that of Jesus Christ and whose celebration coincided with the birth of Jesus. Leslie D. Johnston writes: "... Christ and the Mithraic sun-god had many attributes in common. Also, the date generally agreed upon for

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<sup>17</sup> *Sol Invictus* is the Roman god *Sol* which means the sun. It is a winter solstice festival

celebrated on December 25 and it was first introduced to Rome by Emperor Elagabalus.

<https://www.thecolchesterarchaeologist.co.uk/?p=22534>. 08-10-2020.

the first Christmas on December 25<sup>th</sup> is A.D. 354" (25).

The cult of Sol Invictus was of great importance and popularity until the reign of Constantine, the Roman emperor. It was first introduced to Rome by Elagabalus, the Roman emperor when he came from Syria in A.D. 219. But this worship was neglected after Elagabalus's death in A.D. 222 and revived again by Aurelian, the Roman emperor in A.D. 274, and it remained the major god until the reign of Constantine A.D. 320. F. Heim writes:

It was...the fourteen year old Elagabalus, coming to Rome from Syria in A.D. 219, who was the first to impose this oriental cult of Sol

Invictus on Rome as its supreme deity. After Elagabalus' death in A.D. 222, the cult of Sol Invictus was discredited until it was reintroduced by Aurelian in A.D. 274, and subsequently the sun-god remained a major deity in the Roman pantheon until well into the reign of Constantine (ca.A.D.320). (Qtd in Hijmans,382).

In the fourth century A.D. the cult of Sol Invictus was declined because of the rising of Christianity as Steven Hijmans indicates:"Faced by the rapid rise of Christianity , the cult of Sol declined swiftly in the fourth century A.D. "(382). The pagans and the Christians celebrated the birthday of the Sun on 25 December and this festival was of wide significance in late antiquity. The early church fathers wanted to prevent their followers from participating in these pagan festivals so they celebrated the birth of the Christ on the same

day, December 25 to Christianize this date because of its importance to the Christians. From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia:

*It seems that the choice of 25 December for the celebration of the birth*

*of Jesus was to Christianize the pagan festival of the Dies Natalis Solis*

*Invicti which means "the birth of the Unconquered Sun", a festival inaugurated by the Roman emperor Aurelian (270-275) to celebrate the sun god and was celebrated at the winter solstice, which was 25<sup>th</sup> of December. [tradition] say that during the reign of the emperor Constantine, Christian assimilated this feast of the Venerable Day of the Sun as the birthday of Jesus, associating him with the sun of righteousness (Qtd in Bellone,71).*

The Roman rituals and customs which were followed during the ancient Roman festivals had a great influence on the Christians in antiquity as well as modern times. Although the Christians were forbidden from indulging in these pagan celebrations they imitated its customs and practices. Jennie M. Churco also writes: "The transition from pagan to Christian Rome was not an immediate change, but a gradual one. Saturnalian customs were not abandoned, as easily or as quickly as the Christian fathers would have liked" (25). Christians decorated their homes and streets with green trees as did the pagans. Even the Christmas tree which was originated in Germany in the sixteenth century was an imitation of the Roman custom of decorating houses and streets with evergreen trees as Jennie M. Churco also writes: "The Christmas tree, however, may be the modern survival of

the old Roman custom of decorating streets and houses"(26). Also, exchanging gifts was one of the Roman customs and rites that were followed during their festivities. They used to exchange sweets, lamps, or money and these habits are still followed at Christmas time. Jennie M. Churco also writes: "Our Christmas gifts, and especially our Christmas sweets, are strongly reminiscent of the Saturnalia gifts of the Romans" (26).

There is also the festival of the Kalends of January which was a Roman New Year's Day. Its origins, according to the Palestinian Talmud suppose that it is a festival which is associated with the biblical history referring to Adam, the beginning of history when he realized that the days became longer after the winter solstice. Sarit J. Kattan Gribetz writes: "...the festival was first established by Adam as he observed the natural rhythms of the sun"(69-70).

It was one of the winter pagan feasts which started on December 31st and ended on January 5. The practices and rites of these pagan feasts were of wide influence on Christian celebrations from antiquity to modern times. Thus the changing of the date of Christmas to be celebrated on December 25<sup>th</sup> was to compete with these Roman festivals to keep the Christians from joining in these pagan festivals. Leslie D. Johnston also writes: "...in Roman times the festivities and rites of the month of December started even before the Saturnalia, which began on the seventeenth and continued for several days. Following that, the festival of the first of the year, the Kalendae Ianuariae, began on December 31st and lasted until January 5<sup>th</sup> "(25).

The feast of the Kalends of January, The New Year's Day was a carnival. It was a feast of joy, relaxing, drinking, eating, playing dice, singing, exchanging presents and decoration. Also, it was a feast of equality; because the idea of inversion ruled the carnival as slaves spent their time sitting with their rulers who served them and all people ate together. E. O. James writes: "Signs of rejoicing were visible in the decorations of the houses with greenery and lights, in the carousals and well-laden tables, and the relaxations of the customary rules of social etiquette and decorum" (366).

Thus after discussing the previous Roman festivities and discussing their customs we find that Christianity was influenced by Roman celebrations which reflected the spirit of carnival. All ancient Roman celebrations and their customs which were imitated by the Christians were filled with the atmosphere of joy; celebrants spent their times eating, drinking, playing dice, singing, wearing unusual clothes as you can find men dressed as women, decorating their homes, using masks and giving offerings. These practices and rituals reflected the feelings of the participants when they celebrated the winter solstice, the cults of their gods, the birth of the Christ, Christmas day, New Year Day, and so all these occasions were carnivals which gave its celebrants the chance to participate in a new life, a life which was created by them.

The atmosphere during Roman festivities was chaotic because of the breaking down of all that was holy and respectable in the normal life. The idea of reversal ruled these celebrations as the distinctions

between classes were removed. All celebrants enjoyed equality; slaves enjoyed liberty, beggars acted as if they were kings as all the laws of the official authority were violated. Freedom without any limitations of class or sex was the dominating feature during these ceremonies. Thus the ancient Roman festivals which were Christianized after the rising of Christianity in the fourth century were carnivals whose influence is still evident in antiquity as well as modern times.

### **Renaissance Carnival:**

Carnivals during Renaissance period created a time for its participants to reject the faults of societies. The state of inversion was the dominating feature during these celebrations because people lived in a world with its own laws. Carnivals, unlike official ceremonies, were offering equality among people because chaotic carnivals gave the chance for ordinary people to enjoy life as nobles and do what they normally do not do. Scott D. Collison writes: "Participants often used carnival celebrations as a vehicle for social commentary...social concerns such as collective fears, conflicts, perceptions of social class, perceptions of gender, and the dynamics of political oppression are especially exposed during carnival celebrations" (xv). Thus, according to the writer, carnivals were actually tools for social satire, but they were different from prose, poetic, or even mock epic satires. Carnival celebrations reflected tensions between upper and lower classes so people were able to protest against the ruling class and problems in

their society. These carnivals made a kind of psychological balance among celebrants within a limited time of freedom. Carnivals granted its participants the opportunity to express their thoughts about official authority and the weaknesses of society without fear so tensions of life are reduced. Thus, the nature of the carnival including equality, exchanging roles, inversion of social hierarchies, pointed out a protestation against religion and the excessive power of authority.

Another aspect of Renaissance carnival is the influence of social criticism on literature. Terms of the grotesque<sup>18</sup> were used during Medieval and Renaissance carnival to criticize social faults. The sixteenth century was full of uprisings like the Protestant Reformation which paved the way for revolutions against social and political changes between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries as Louise M. Leclair also writes: "Between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, Western European states were almost continuously involved in either civil strife or international wars, including the religious wars, the Reformation, the Inquisition and the Thirty Years Wars<sup>19</sup>" (36). Carnival during Renaissance gave people

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<sup>18</sup> It is used to describe strange and distorted forms and bodily functions; eating, drink, and sex.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grotesque>. 09-10-2020.

<sup>19</sup> Thirty Years Wars was the 17<sup>th</sup> century religious conflict in central Europe, and it has lasted

from 1618 to 1648, so it was one the longest and most violent wars in human history. It

occurred in Germany as Germany was split into provinces that were ruled by princes, and it

started as a religious conflict between the Catholic and Protestant states that constituted the

the opportunity to protest against problems in society through the image of the grotesque body which symbolized society. This grotesque image of the body aimed at revealing and resisting the weaknesses of society exploiting the state of reversal which is the dominant characteristic of carnival festivities. Mary Russo writes: "The masks and voices of carnival resist, exaggerate, and destabilize the distinctions and boundaries that mark and maintain high culture and organized society" (62).

The image of the grotesque body refers to the process of change, endless and renewal through which the body was connected to the rest of the world. Its emphasis is devoted to the functions of the open, the penetrative and lower stratum. According to Joshua R. Eyler, Mikhail Bakhtin sees that :

...the grotesque body becomes central to carnivalesque literature's ability to upset socio-political hierarchies through humor. Images of the grotesque body concentrate on the lower strata of the body and the mouth—it is through the mouth and out of the bowels that the grotesque body is able to take in and expel other bodies, thus signifying its

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Holy Roman Empire. Later, it turned into a political conflict because of the involving of

foreign powers like Sweden and France. In 1648, this long conflict ended in a series of

treaties called the Peace of Westphalia which granted increased autonomy to the Holy Roman

Empire. <https://www.history.com/topics/reformation/thirty-years-war>. 09-10-2020.

incompleteness. Everything about the grotesque body centers on excess; as such, images of the grotesque body focus on eating, drinking, defecating, giving birth, and dying. As a result, the fecundity and excess of the grotesque body links the grotesque (Sic) with the female body (Eyler, 29).

The lower bodily organs are overtly used by the writer to upset the despotic rules of the ruler in an oppressive society. Carnival protested against everything that was holy and irrepressible in normal life through utilizing its main features like mockery, degradation, humour, and inversion. Also ambivalence was one of the main characteristics of carnival celebrations. The image of the grotesque body reflected this idea, as it presented the continuing cycles of birth and death so it was frightening as well as humorous.

The image of grotesque body was identified with the process of fertility; because of its connection with birth and death, growth and becoming, so it was associated with the female body. According to Joshua R. Eyler, Mikhail Bakhtin sees that: "the fecundity and excess of the grotesque body links the grotesque with the female body"(Eyler, 29).After the transition from Medieval feudal systems to early modern state, the role of women was marginalized; because they were accused of being a device that was concerned with the reproductive process, especially in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Catherine Marie Winn writes:"The maternal body encompasses all pregnant, laboring, post-partum, and lactating bodies, but it also refers to those that are fertile or

menstruating (and therefore monstrous) and those that are capable of sexual power, knowledge, desire, and pleasure"(2). Women were seen only as a symbol of fertility because of their connection with the process of pregnancy and childbirth so their bodies were a mere grotesque leading to better things because of their maternity. Renaissance perception of the body was like the classical body of Aristotle and Claudius Galen which was regarded as closed and static, and did not connect to the rest of the world as Catherine Marie Winn also writes: "the outdated Classical model...had established women as natural, naturally inferior monsters" (ii).

During the Renaissance period the image of the female body was related only to the lower bodily functions, and it described in literature as a way that evoked sexual thoughts. Catherine M. Winn also writes: "Pregnant bodies, laboring women, lactating breasts—all of this was most often depicted in grotesque, satirical, and bawdy literature... might incite lustful or sinful thoughts" (17). But because of the English Civil War (1642-1651), Scientific Revolution, and the Protestant Reformation, the perspective of women bodies had been changed, according to Catherine M. Winn, Mary E. Fissell suggests that

the Protestant Reformation, the early Scientific Revolution, and the English Civil War all profoundly shaped the way English people thought about reproduction and reproductive bodies, and, vice versa, that representations of bodies affected the way the political,

social, and religious changes developed (Qtd in Winn, 18-19).

Women embodied revolutions which affected social, political, and religious changes. They exploited carnival festivals to ignore the established hierarchy and protested against the power of society. Natalie Zemon Davis writes:

The image of the disorderly woman did not always function to keep

women in their place. On the contrary, it was a multivalent image that could operate, first, to widen behavioral options for women within and even outside marriage, and second, to sanction riot and political disobedience for both men and women in a society that allowed the lower orders few formal means of protest. Play with an unruly woman is partly a chance for temporary release from the traditional and stable hierarchy; but it is also part of the conflict over efforts to change the basic distribution of power within society (Qtd in Russo, 58).

In these lines women in their carnivalesque celebrations transgressed all that was established and holy, and encouraged popular upheavals to reform the static norms of society. They aimed at justifying social transformation and changes that happened after wars and revolutions. The temporary release from the established authority during carnival festivities gave them the freedom to criticize society, and so endanger the status of the ruler.

Thus, carnivals during the Renaissance period paved the way to protest in two different ways: Firstly, it created a second world for common people where they celebrated and enjoyed freedom escaping from the stable hierarchy. People challenged and showed their disobedience for the bad sides of society to reinforce the renewal of existing social structure. Secondly, using literature to express social criticisms; the image of grotesque body depicted the society in a humorous way, and at the same time it affected the political, social, and religious changes.

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