D.O.I. http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/2176-457350342

ARTICLES

Embracing the Spirit of Carnival: the Grotesque and the Carnivalesque in Rolando Hinojosa's *Klail City Death Trip Series* / *Acolhendo o espírito de Carnaval: o grotesco e o carnavalesco em* Klail City Death Trip Series*, de Rolando Hinojosa*

Svetlana Yu. Pavlina[*]
Maria I. Baranova [**]

ABSTRACT
The article is concerned with artistic properties of one of the staples of Chicano literature, the *Klail City Death Trip Series* by Rolando Hinojosa, which are viewed from the perspective of the culture of popular laughter. The research draws upon Bakhtin's theory of carnival and the carnivalesque. The analysis reveals that carnival laughter affects the system of images; it permeates the system of characters and shapes the speech structure of the novels. The dual nature of the comic characters, who work as a destructive force and at the same time are bearers of the truth, encapsulates the culture of carnival laughter. Another representation of the carnivalesque and the grotesque is the masks that Chicanos wear. The grotesque serves as a survival tool for the Chicano community, depicted in the novels, that helps them combat the fear of the inevitable.
KEYWORDS: Chicano Literature; Carnivalesque; Grotesque; Bakhtin; Rolando Hinojosa

RESUMO
O presente artigo diz respeito às propriedades artísticas de uma das obras básicas da literatura chicana, Klail City Death Trip Series *de Rolando Hinojosa, observadas através da perspectiva da cultura do riso popular. A pesquisa baseia-se na teoria de Bakhtin sobre o carnaval e o carnavalesco. A análise revela que o riso carnavalesco afeta o sistema de imagens, permeia o sistema de personagens e molda a estrutura do discurso dos romances. O caráter duplo dos personagens cômicos, que agem como uma força destrutiva e ao mesmo tempo são portadores da verdade, engloba a cultura do riso carnavalesco. Outro meio de representação do carnavalesco e do grotesco são as máscaras que os chicanos usam. O grotesco serve de ferramenta de sobrevivência para a comunidade chicana, retratada nos romances, ajudando-os a combater o medo do inevitável.*
PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Literatura chicana; Carnavalesco; Grotesco; Bakhtin; Rolando Hinojosa

[*] Linguistics University of Nizhny Novgorod, Higher School of Translation and Interpreting, Nizhny Novgorod, Russia; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8304-795X; Pavlina.Svetlana@mail.ru
[**] Linguistics University of Nizhny Novgorod, Department of the French, Spanish and Italian Languages, Nizhny Novgorod, Russia; https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1062-2033; baranovamarria@gmail.com

All content of *Bakhtiniana*. Revista de Estudos do Discurso is licensed under a Creative Commons attribution-type CC-BY 4.0

> In the epochs of great transformation and re-evaluation, of the change of the truths, the whole life assumes a carnivalesque quality, to some extent.
> *M. M. Bakhtin*

Rolando Hinojosa-Smith is a bilingual Chicano novelist and essayist, a winner of literary awards *the Quinto Sol Awards* and *Casa de las Américas Prize*. His most acclaimed novels titled *Klail City Death Trip Series* are set in the fictional Belken County and are populated with local characters that bare strong resemblance to the inhabitants of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, where Hinojosa was born in 1929. His Mexican and American family roots enabled him to write both in Spanish and English, and he drew inspiration for his fiction from his surroundings.

In his interviews Rolando Hinojosa underlined the fact that his novels cannot be alienated from the history of his people, so his works incorporate the modern history of Chicanos, living near the Mexican border in the state of Texas. Hinojosa emphasizes his sense of place, he writes about the people he knows and the people of the Valley are the key to understanding his works. Rolando Hinojosa puts it in the following way:

> For the writer – this writer – a sense of place was not a matter of importance; it became essential. And so much that my stories are not held together by the *peripeteia* or the plot as much as by *what* people who populate the stories say and *how* they say it, how they look at the world out and the world in: and the works, then, become studies of those perceptions and values which in turn were fashioned and forged by the place and the history (Hinojosa, 1985, p.21).

Hinojosa chronicles the events and the life of people in the fictional replica of the Rio Grande region. He portrays some generations of a big ethnic group in a historical background employing a set of narrators and protagonists. Hinojosa's depiction of the Southern world acquires some Faulknerian traits. The writer focuses his attention on the internal and external conflicts of his personages that originate from the Mexican American cultural matrix. His novels highlight the clash and interrelation of worldviews typical of different layers of Southerners: the descendants of the first settlers, whose ancestors arrived from Spain, Englishmen, Mexicans, who arrived in Texas a century later and the new generation of Mexican Americans.

All content of *Bakhtiniana*. Revista de Estudos do Discurso is licensed under a Creative Commons attribution-type CC-BY 4.0

The early novels of the *Klail City Death Trip Series – Klail City Death Trip Series – The Valley* (1983)[1] and *Klail City* (1987)[2] - are saturated with humour of a special quality. Chicano humour is determined by the community's double identity, by the Boderland's shifting cultural and linguistic boundaries. Chicanos, who live in the US but have Mexican roots, experience double influence, which predetermines the unique quality of their humour. Numerous researchers underline the role of ethnic humour, especially the bilingual humour of immigrants as a means of adaptation, of asserting some unique identity of the group, which facilitates interpersonal interaction and consolidates the community. (Voronchenko,1992; Elenevskaya, 2014)

Chicano humor has become the focal point of scholarly interest and has been studied from various angles. Examining Hinojosa's early works, Joyce Glover Lee highlights their heterogeneous character, writing that they are "at once comic and tragic, ironic and ingenuous." (Lee, 1993, p.6) Lee assumes that Hinojosa's humor is marked by some tinge of tragedy, since it "shifts rapidly from irony to humor to pathos to tragedy." (Lee, 1993, pp.20-21) María I. Duke dos Santos and Patricia de la Fuente (1985, p.72) underline the anecdotal nature of Hinojosa's narrative, considering it the writer's trademark. Rosaura Sanchez (1985, p.80) singles out irony and humor as the outstanding characteristics of Rolando Hinojosa's novels. José David Saldívar (1985, p.520) pays attention to their dialogic novelistic form, marked by oral expansiveness and analyzes situational and verbal irony employed in the novels.

In the *Klail City Death Trip Series* the voices of numerous characters combine to weave the fabric of narration. The protagonists alongside their family members, friends and foes appear in all the novels of the series attributing some sense of continuity to the narration, which allows for the usage of heteroglossia in Rolando Hinojosa's works. (Baranova, 2017) It opens a new perspective on the Chicano humour which has not been studied comprehensively and calls for further investigation. The all-embracing humor of the community echoes the carnival sense of the world which Mikhail Bakhtin explored

[1] HINOJOSA, R. *Estampas del valle y otras obras* [first novel in *Klail City Death Trip Series*]. Berkeley, CA: Quinto Sol, 1972. Revised English language edition published as: HINOJOSA, R. *The Valley*. Ypsilanti, MI: Bilingual Press, 1983.

[2] HINOJOSA, R. *Klail City y sus alrededores* [second novel in *Klail City Death Trip Series*]. Bilingual edition with translation by Rosaura Sanchez. Casa de las Americas, 1976; Translation by Rolando Hinojosa published as *Klail City*. Houston, TX: Arte Publico Press, 1987.

All content of *Bakhtiniana*. Revista de Estudos do Discurso is licensed under a Creative Commons attribution-type CC-BY 4.0

in detail. We suppose that humour in the *Klail City Death Trip Series* is akin to carnival laughter, which Bakhtin defined as festive laughter (Bakhtin, 1984a).

The hypothesis of the research is that Rolando Hinojosa's novels reveal some traits of carnival and the carnivalesque elements become the focusing components of the narration. The aim of the research is to analyze the characters and the story line through the prism of Bakhtin's theory of the grotesque and the carnivalesque, to establish the type of the comic in the novels and examine it in the light of the culture of popular laughter.

1 Bakhtinian Treatment of Carnival and Carnivalesque

Traditionally carnival is viewed as a festivity, some form of popular entertainment, a masquerade. M. Bakhtin introduced a theoretical model explaining the essence of carnival and masquerade, which laid the foundation for further research in the field. This theory was developed in Bakhtin's works *Rabelais and his World* (Bakhtin, 1984a) and *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics* (Bakhtin, 1984b). According to Bakhtin, the folk humor permeating Rabelais' novel is based on the medieval marketplace culture of popular laughter. The carnival world with its traditions and its views that seemed to be turned upside down, with its specific behavioral patterns is called "the culture of carnival laughter" in Bakhtin's theory. The culture of popular laughter is a new world, parallel to the conventional one, which provides some escape from mundane reality. In the book devoted to Dostoyevsky's poetics Bakhtin explains the way the confessional combines with the fantastic and the serious merges with the comic.

According to Bakhtin, the culture of popular laughter is a complex phenomenon, dating back to Middle Ages. It is defined as a form of opposition to official cultural forms and practices. The culture of popular laughter created a different world, defying the church and the state, which was characterized by different relationships between people and thus was called "the second world," "the second life."

Bakhtin assumed that the culture of popular laughter has various forms of expression that fall into three main types:

> 1. *Ritual spectacles*: carnival pageants, comic shows of the marketplace.

All content of *Bakhtiniana*. Revista de Estudos do Discurso is licensed under a Creative Commons attribution-type CC-BY 4.0

> 2. *Comic verbal compositions*: parodies both oral and written, in Latin and in the vernacular.
> 3. *Various genres of billingsgate*: curses, oaths, popular blazons (Bakhtin, 1984a, p.6; emphasis in original).

Being heterogeneous, these three forms represent the world through the prism of popular laughter; they are interrelated and intertwine in various ways.

The idea that the culture of popular laughter stands in opposition to official culture is supported by the Russian linguist Dmitry Likhachev (1976), who observed that laughter stems from the world's double nature and it reveals the other, hidden side of the medal, highlighting the low in the phenomena that seemed to be high.

Discussing the carnival culture, Bakhtin argues that during the carnival all the rules and regulations governing everyday life are suspended. This suspension refers to the hierarchical system and all the forms of fear, awe and etiquette associated with different types of inequality. It results in the suspension of any social distance among people and the emergence of a free informal interaction, which Bakhtin believes to be a special carnival category. At a carnival place hierarchical barriers, that seemed to be impenetrable, are no longer relevant. It brings to life a new mode of interpersonal relationships which is marked by unrestrained gestures and wording. Such liberation from any restrains entails certain eccentric behavior which is normally unacceptable in usual life, the life beyond the carnival (Bakhtin, 1984b).

In his treatment of "the second world" defying the official world of civil and religious authority, of carnival contesting power, Umberto Eco argues that this confrontation is not truly revolutionary, since various forms of public entertainment have been employed by repressive cultures to maintain control (Eco; Ivanov; Rector, 1984). It follows that according to Eco common people become their masters due to carnival reversal. However, Bakhtin viewed carnivals as some ideal dimension, different from mundane life, which makes festivities temporary and utopian. During festivities, Bakhtin notes, people have a chance to get a temporary access to some utopian world. (Bakhtin, 1984a) Thus the denial of the hierarchical order and the reversal of dominant social relations are something temporary; the control of people over authorities is symbolic. According to Bakhtin, the action of crowning and de-crowning of the king serves as a symbol of changes, of death and renewal (Bakhtin, 1984a). In different cultures popular laughter was restricted to certain dates marking festivities when it was possible to get out

All content of *Bakhtiniana*. Revista de Estudos do Discurso is licensed under a Creative Commons attribution-type CC-BY 4.0

of some official rut. Carnivals have temporal and spacial arrangement, they have their own rhythm, as soon as they end, their potential for transgression ends as well. (Gray, 2006) At the same time Dzyaloshinsky (2019) observes that no social structure can be stable if it deprives people of joys of life. That is why the language of carnival is saturated with laughter which exposes the relativity of power and the ruling truths. Unrestrained and informal interactions, that carnival offers, provide a temporary way of experiencing the fullness of life and bring about some joyous renewal.

Many researchers of festive culture assumed that any festivity means doing away with social and cultural boundaries, when culture defies its own norms and values and regenerates itself (Eliade, 1998; Cox, 1969; Paz, 1961). It is a sort of life shaped according to some pattern of play. The playful nature of carnival is associated with grotesque imagery and language. Bakhtin attributes some deep philosophical meaning to grotesque carnival images, treating degradation as its underlying principle, when all that is high, spiritual and ideal is lowered and diminished to the material level. Bringing the elevated down to earth serves the purpose of uniting people, it shows that regardless of their social standing all people share the same physiological functions.

Transformation, which is a defining feature of the carnivalesque, relates closely to the theme of a mask. According to Bakhtin, masks symbolize the joy of change and transformation, joyous relativity and joyous denial of unambiguity (Bakhtin, 1984a). The theme of a mask is attributed great importance, since it is believed to be the most complex and extremely polysemantic theme of popular culture. The mask is associated with transformations, metamorphoses, the violation of natural boundaries, with derision, with nicknames (instead of names); the mask serves as the embodiment of the playful origin of life, it is based on a totally different interrelation between reality and image, which is typical of some archaic ritual spectacles (Bakhtin, 1984a).

The mask serves as a signifier of metamorphoses and mockery, assuming a nickname instead of a real name. Masques used during carnivals manifest a special relationship between reality and image, which originates in ancient rituals. Thus parody, caricature, grimace can be treated as derivatives of a mask. Bakhtin notes that the mask reflects the essence of grotesque. Unlike Romantic grotesque, carnivalesque grotesque is characterized by fearlessness:

All content of *Bakhtiniana*. Revista de Estudos do Discurso is licensed under a Creative Commons attribution-type CC-BY 4.0

> On the other hand, the medieval and Renaissance folk culture was familiar with the element of terror only as represented by comic monsters, who were defeated by laughter. Terror was turned into something gay and comic. Folk culture brought the world close to man, gave it a bodily form, and established a link through the body and bodily life, in contrast to the abstract and spiritual mastery sought by Romanticism (Bakhtin, 1984a, p.39).

The grotesque image acquires ambivalence and works as an unfinished metamorphosis of the world which combines both poles of transformation – the old and the new, something which is dying and something which is born, the beginning and the end of metamorphosis (Bakhtin, 1984a).

D. Danow (1995) addresses the issue of the origin of the mask, tracing it to nature's tendency to disguise. He argues that the mask represents some duality between man and nature. The author concludes that the mask can be viewed as a metaphor for nature, mirroring the endless stories of transformation.

The affinity of man and nature manifests itself in animalization of a comic hero, when the mask contributes to the rediculization of the zoomorphic little man. Thus the mask helps people to pass over in laughter the difficulty of everyday life. (Eco; Ivanov; Rector, 1984) True to the carnivalesque tradition the analysis of Mexican fiestas, provided by Octavio Paz, reveals the rejection of order and disappearance of traditional hierarchies. The author underlines the reversal property of fiestas when "men disguise themselves as women, gentlemen as slaves, the poor as the rich" (Paz, 1961, p.51). The desire to dress up and wear masks is seen as a form of escapism, which in its turn is a revolt against established norms. It is possible to conclude that masks have some liberating effect as they bolster fearlessness. Parody and degradation bring fears down to earth, shaping them as something worldly which people can overcome.

Bakhtin notes that carnival developed a whole array of symbolic forms, its own signs, which can't be adequately rendered into a natural language but can be expressed with the help of literary images. This property of literature to serve as a vehicle for carnival expression is called carnivalization. In his work on Dostoyevsky Bakhtin expressed it in the following way:

> This language cannot be translated in any full or adequate way into a verbal language, and much less into a language of abstract concepts, but it is amenable to a certain transposition into a language of artistic

All content of *Bakhtiniana*. Revista de Estudos do Discurso is licensed under a Creative Commons attribution-type CC-BY 4.0

> images that has something in common with its concretely sensuous nature; that is, it can be transposed into the language of literature. We are calling this transposition of carnival into the language of literature the carnivalization of literature (Bakhtin, 1984b, p.122).

2 Chicanos Culture of Popular Laughter

In his work *Additions and Alterations to "Rabelais"* Bakhtin underlines the pervasive nature of the carnivalesque, which becomes especially evident at some crucial moments of change: "(…) the boundaries of the official world shrink and this world loses its strictness and confidence, while the boundaries of the market place expand and its atmosphere starts to penetrate everywhere" (Bakhtin, 1992, p.154).

Rolando Hinojosa builds on this ever-expanding marketplace idea in his novels creating the narration which is variegated and colourful, a patchwork of narratives performed in accordance with the culture of popular laughter. The polyphonic form, which Bakhtin deemed to be one of the main features of a carnivalesque novel, is aptly employed by Hinojosa. The narration is not linear, since it constantly alternates between the main characters as the principal narrative points and switches among secondary characters, creating some tapestry studded with folk humour.

The elements of the plot are presented from various perspectives when different characters assume the role of the narrator, become the subject of narration or perform the role of a listener. This alternation of roles can be presented as active – quasi-active – passive. The line between these three types of roles is quite fuzzy. That is why Guillermo Hernández classifies such a technique as the one turning the readers into "quasi-oral listeners, embedded in a community context" (Hernandez, 1991, p.13).

The humorous discourse of the novels encompasses two types: the protagonists' humor and the popular laughter of minor characters. The protagonists of the novels Rafe/Rafa Buenrostro, Jehú Malacara and Galindo perform the function of narrators and represent the new generation of Chicanos: they were born in the USA, got educated there and are drifting away from their community in search of their place under the sun. They appear to be between two worlds, that is why they are critical about both Mexican and Anglo-Americans. Rafe tends to be ironical, while Jehú, a picaresque *hero*, resorts to sarcasm, being straightforward, frank, and free, devoid of any restrains. Thus, his speech is similar to informal interaction of a market place, to the billingsgate.

All content of *Bakhtiniana*. Revista de Estudos do Discurso is licensed under a Creative Commons attribution-type CC-BY 4.0

The second type of humor is characteristic of minor personages. It also appears in the chapters where the personages remain anonymous and their words combine to create some polyphony, the collective voice of the community. This popular laughter determines the old generation of Chicanos, those who find it difficult to integrate into the American society and also younger Mexican-Americans who preserve their own traditions and live in isolation within their community. Using informal and sometime vulgar expressions they deride Anglo-Americans as well as those Chicanos who do not respect the values of the community.

The inscriptions in the bar where Rafe works incorporate the popular laughter of Chicanos. These down-to-earth, spicy expressions are very aptly put; their humorous effect is based on wordplay and some creative transformations of set expressions:

- *Dirty Linen Had Damn Well Better Be Washed at Home.*
- *Nosey Neighbors Need a Nose Job.*
- *The Hard of Hearing Should Learn to Lip-Read.*
- *When it Comes to the Law: Mum's the Word.*
- *The Losers of the World Need a Shorter Bridge to Walk On.*
- *Meddling is Asking for Trouble on Credit.* (Hinojosa, 2014a, p.25)

Apart from the billingsgate, the carnivalesque can be traced in the author's creation of masks that Chicanos wear. According to Bakhtin, the mask is the most complex theme of folk culture. It is connected with the joy of change and reincarnation. The mask is related to transition, metamorphosis, and the transgression of natural boundaries (Bakhtin, 1984a).

The masks in Hinojosa's carnival represent a certain opposition. The most prominent of them is the Coyote versus the Lamb, the hunter pit against the prey.

The coyote is one of the most frightening masks at the carnival. In Mexican Spanish, a coyote is an official who is in charge of paperwork and payments related to illegal immigrants. In Hinojosa's novels this type is personified by Adrián Peralta, a local coyote, who "works both the halls and the innocents" in the Belken County Court House (Hinojosa, 2014b, p.138). Peralta does not have any official position in the County Court. However, he makes his living by fooling intimidated Mexican Americans who come into the court offices.

All content of *Bakhtiniana*. Revista de Estudos do Discurso is licensed under a Creative Commons attribution-type CC-BY 4.0

Hinojosa dehumanizes Peralta, portraying him as a predator who, tireless and patient, is waiting for his prey, “wide-eyed and lost, looking up and down, north to south, and left to right, east to west,” and, once the prey is there, he is heads-up:

> He’s also on his feet in case, just in case, another one of God’s lambs should show up. And they will. They always do, he says. And he’s right (…) wide-eyed and lost, looking up and down, north to south, and left to right, east to west and then: “Good morning, señora. My name is Adrián Peralta - may I help you in any way? (Hinojosa, 2014b, p.143)

Hinojosa’s metaphorical description of Peralta’s lurking in wait is marked by some special rhythm achieved by antithesis. Peralta’s deft movements bear resemblance to those of a beast who is alert and ready to attack.

This man is devoid of moral scruples; he acts with precision and efficiency, which the author associates with tactical moves and combat activities. Every word he utters is carefully shaped, rehearsed and delivered just at the right time as if in a well-arranged mission:

> “May I?” “Please? Oh, yessir; here you are.” At what the Germans refer to as the psychological impulse, Peralta gives out a long, almost private, mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm, steeped in mystery. (Artillery bombardment to soften the troops.) From there, he stares at Don Marcial and, before the fidgeting starts, another look at the envelope. (Reconnaissance patrols, radio and machine gun jeeps in working order.) And now Peralta opens the envelope and reads the letter. (The gathering of prisoners for intelligence purposes.) He takes Don Marcial by the elbow. (Mission completed, it’s now a matter of filling and filing the reports.) (…) Peralta looks at his watch and asks for so and so and then for some other so and so; no, he’s not here. I don’t know where he is. Thanks. Another office, and Peralta smiles down to the candy maker. (Good report, boys, we’ll just send this on down to battalion.) “This is it, friend de Anda. I’m going to get to the bottom of this, and I’ll do it before you can count to three; and, speaking of three, you think you can rustle up three ones for me?” (Hinojosa, 2014b, p.140).

Peralta is depicted as a predator, faithful to his principles, the one who occupies some dominant position in the community food chain and feeds on Lambs of God. One of his victims is Marcial de Anda, a man of an older generation, *un hombre de bien*, “a religious, pious soul,” “small-boned, timid little man and generous,” who “used to sell

All content of *Bakhtiniana*. Revista de Estudos do Discurso is licensed under a Creative Commons attribution-type CC-BY 4.0

homemade candy" (Hinojosa, 2014a, p.30). Marcial de Anda comes to the County Court because he received a "white envelope" in English, which he takes as a foreboding.

Peralta cons de Anda into giving him some money to "grease this heavy bureaucratic machinery." Although, in the end, Miss Espinoza, one of the County Court employees, explains to de Anda that the letter he received is a jury service note and warns him against people like Peralta, saying that the officials take no money for their service, for unilingual Mexican Americans the experience is so stressful that once they feel relief, they forget all the warnings. De Anda behaves like prey that manages to have a narrow escape:

> Free! Home! He barely hears the admonition, and since he doesn't have to shell out his remaining dollar and seventy-five cents (it's four seventy-five for a candy maker's permit) he's already forgotten about the three he gave to the coyote. He'll also forget Miss Espinoza's advice: he's going home and in peace; until the next envelope (Hinojosa, 2014b, p.142).

To show the absurdity of such a situation Hinojosa employs a whole array of techniques: free indirect speech "Free! Home!", irony combined with amplification "barely hears the admonition… he's already forgotten… He'll also forget… home and in peace; until the next envelope." Using the animalistic metamorphosis, the author shows the normal functioning of the Chicano habitat with its natural selection and biological diversity of the Valley populated by pious Mexican-American souls, naïve, humble and not literate in English, living alongside their sly and devious fellow Chicanos who never hesitate to take Lambs of God for a ride.

3 Carnival Fools

Rolando Hinojosa's novels also feature a diversity of carnival fools. For instance, introducing Emilio Tamez in his books, Hinojosa creates a modern jester who entertains the common folk. Emilio is a walking disaster, and his entire life seems to be one big misadventure. He is lame because at the age of eleven "he slipped on a piece of broccoli" when he was jumping from railroad tracks. Emilio has only one ear, as the other was "sliced off," like "a slice o' bread" at a cantina one night (Hinojosa, 2014b, p.153).

All content of *Bakhtiniana*. Revista de Estudos do Discurso is licensed under a Creative Commons attribution-type CC-BY 4.0

Emilio's disability is described in a carnivalesque manner. The accent of the fragment is on the special connection among food, body and death, in accordance with the principle of the material body and the lower stratum of the body (Bakhtin, 1984a). Although Emilio is bilingual and should be considered superior in the community, his compadres tease and make fun of him without a trace of compassion: "You wouldn't know it to look at him, but he reads and writes English and Spanish. A tee-total bilingual, he is; but, with all that going for him, he's still a dam fool" (Hinojosa, 2014b, p.153) He is smart, but the crowd ignores his abilities and looks only for something to laugh at: "It's the law of compensation all over again: he limps on the left side and is deaf on the right" (Hinojosa, 2014b, p.153) Hinojosa portrays Emilio in accordance with the Mexican grotesque tradition as an objectified person with some physical deformities.

Another type of the fool is a cuckolded husband. Young Murillo becomes the laughing stock in the neighborhood as he blissfully carries on with his married life completely unaware of his wife's infidelity. Hinojosa uses simile "didn't raise his daughter to be no goddam watermelon" in the speech of Murillo's father-in-law who assured the man of his fiancé's honesty (Hinojosa, 2014b, p.73). Don Víctor's metaphor encapsulates folk humor and wit, which helps him to save his daughter's reputation. Murillo does not question his wife's loyalty and displays blinding self-confidence: "he still considers himself quite a card" (Hinojosa, 2014b, p.73).

> When Young Murillo told Don Víctor Solís he wanted to test Estefanita prior to the marriage ceremony, Don Víctor replied that he didn't raise his daughter to be no goddam watermelon. This happened a long time ago, and Young Murillo still considers himself quite a card, as they used to say; trouble with that is that at this late date, he still has no idea how many times he's been fitted for antlers (Hinojosa, 2014b, p.73).

Another master of disaster is Melitón Burnias who serves as the embodiment of the folly in Hinojosa's novels. According to Bakhtin, folly is utterly ambivalent. It "is the opposite of wisdom – inverted wisdom, inverted truth. It is the other side, the lower stratum of official laws and conventions derived from them. Folly is a form of playful festive wisdom, free from laws and restrictions as well as from preoccupations and seriousness" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p.260). Melitón Burnias is a "town fool," he is poor and miserable, his daughter kicked him out into the street and his misfortune seems endless,

All content of *Bakhtiniana*. Revista de Estudos do Discurso is licensed under a Creative Commons attribution-type CC-BY 4.0

but his bad luck “has the negative element of debasement and destruction and the positive element of renewal and truth” (Bakhtin, 1984a, p.260).

> To add to this, he was worse off than penniless: he was constantly, endlessly, irreversibly poor. He had high hopes, but he also had bad luck, as we say in Belken. For example, when Tila, his eldest girl, ran off with Práxedes Cervera, they were back within the week and, in tandem, the two carried Burnias out into the street and left him there. The man, and this is gospel, shrugged his shoulders, dusted himself off and went to find a place to sleep, which he did: the watermelon patch. That same night, it rained like hail (Hinojosa, 2014b, p.53).

Burnias’s penniless misery is emphasized with a chain of epithets, “constantly, endlessly, irreversibly poor,” which are arranged climatically to intensify the irony. The bad luck motif enhances the comic effect: Burnias is “worse off than penniless,” he is “carried out to the street,” and once he is outside, “it rained like hail.” However sorrowful, these events are recounted with a good deal of humor that stems from the objectification of Burnias who finds himself alone in the street like a stray animal: “carried Burnias out into the street and left him there,” “went to find a place to sleep” (Hinojosa, 2014b, p.53).

Nevertheless, Melitón’s bad luck does not stop him from moving on with his life. Homeless Burnias gets some part-time jobs to earn his living. His employers are “not unlucky people.” One of them is Martin Lalanda, a successful merchant, who owns lands, farms on share and a truck to “take gravel from place to place on a contract basis.” The narrator calls Lalanda snug, because according to one of the characters, Lalanda “has never bought as much as a bottle of beer for anyone, anytime, anywhere. Snug, then, but not a bad person.” Lalanda hires Burnias to drive his truck and allows him to sleep in it. The contract they make is work for accommodation (Hinojosa, 2014b, p.145).

Again, Hinojosa opts for grotesque, animalizing and degrading Burnias who sleeps in a watermelon patch, but does not feel uncomfortable, being carefree and nonchalant. The narrator notes that the pig and its new owner give an impression of harmony and affinity.

> Burnias was dead tired and dropped off under the tuck bed; the pig did the same. At daybreak, Lalanda and his driver found the pair fast asleep, and Lalanda decided to wake up the one who could talk (Hinojosa, 2014b, p.147).

All content of *Bakhtiniana*. Revista de Estudos do Discurso is licensed under a Creative Commons attribution-type CC-BY 4.0

Another notorious employer is Old Man Chandler, “not unlucky” either, as he “has got some good river-bank land by Relámpago” (Hinojosa, 2014b, p.146). He provides Burnias with a temporary job, employing him for three days, but pays with a pig, suffering from belly worms. Even without knowing about the problem, Burnias still feels that he is “diddled again” when he gets his “payment.”

Quite undiscouraged, Burnias still comes up with a business plan and asks Lalanda for two dollars to buy food for the pig as he wants to fatten it up and sell it. He also promises to share money with Lalanda whose “ear pearted up on the us and on the money” (Hinojosa, 2014b, p.146). and who eagerly seizes the opportunity to make easy money. However, at the weekly stock sales in Klail City the partners fail to sell the animal because of the worms. Commenting on their fiasco, Lalanda employs folk humor and its characteristic “material body lower stratum”:

> I’m telling you, Melitón, your luck is so bad that dogs’ll line up to pee on you, you know that?” Burnias nodded again, and said, “Yeh, I guess so; but why stop at dogs? Pigs’ll do it, if you let ’em” (Hinojosa, 2014b, p.148).

Burnias echoes the joke, realizing that he cannot break his vicious circle of bad luck, which has become a part of his personality. Eventually, Lalanda talks him into returning the pig to the previous owner, Old Man Chandler, as a gift which the man won’t be able to refuse without giving any explanation. The plan works out and Old Man Chandler pays Burnias the money he promised for his work and covers the partners’ losses.

Being the carrier of inverted wisdom or inverted truth, Burnias with his bad luck acts as a trigger or a litmus test for others who met him, revealing their nature and potential, which prove to be either positive or negative.

One such “lucky” character tested by Burnias’s bad luck is Bruno Cano, “a successful merchant as well as the sole owner of a slaughterhouse.” (Hinojosa, 2014b, p.53). Bruno is willing to go treasure hunting with Burnias at Doña Panchita’s lot, driven by the same desire as Lalanda who went pig-selling, but “Burnias, however, was not avaricious – didn’t even know the meaning of the word” (Hinojosa, 2014b, p.146). In this regard, Bruno Cano and Burnias reveal some similarity to Don Quixote and Sancho Panza who set off on a quest for adventures that ended up in a miserable misadventure.

All content of *Bakhtiniana*. Revista de Estudos do Discurso is licensed under a Creative Commons attribution-type CC-BY 4.0

Hinojosa paints a vivid and hilarious scene of the treasure hunt based on a ridiculously absurd confusion between Cano and Burnias who persistently mishear each other's words. The following conversation unfolds when Cano is digging inside the hole and Burnias is waiting for him at the top, spreading dirt:

> "Close! I said we're gettin' close here."
> "A ghost? Near, did you say?"
> "What? What did you say? A ghost? Where-a-ghost? Here?"
> "There-a-ghost? Oh, dear! My God, my God, it's clear!"
> "A ghost is clear? Is that what you said, goddamit? Melitón? What are you doing? Melitón! Answer me!"
> "A ghost? Bruno, I gotta get outta here!"
> "A ghost? Did that idiot … Jesus! Did he say a ghost! Jesus, save me, Lord!" (Hinojosa, 2014b, p.54).

Thus the partners frighten each other to death and Burnias runs for his life in the most quixotic manner, without looking back and abandoning his desperate partner in the pit:

> By this time, Burnias was headed straight for the melon patch and making good time. Cano, for his part, began to scream for help, but Burnias was out of earshot by then: he had cleared two fences clean, had jumped across three fairly wide puddles without trying and he was then chased by most of the neighborhood dogs (Hinojosa, 2014b, p.55).

In this episode, Burnias, who never boasted much strength or stamina and was constantly starving, miraculously turns into a steeplechase runner. His animalistic traits are also highlighted as Burnias is heading for his patch like a frightened animal running to its burrow. Ironically, Bruno Cano catches Burnias's curse and dies in the pit. Without doubt, Buno's bad luck has a certain element of destruction since it causes trouble. At the same time it can be deemed as something positive, because it is associated with renewal and truth. This goes in line with the Bakhtinian concept of the joyous and the sorrowful being two parts of one coin, of life and death being closely connected. Hinojosa uses grotesque to introduce his notion of Death in Chicano novels. Bruno Cano is left in the hole to die an ironic death; another character dies under unusual circumstances being bitten by a dog suffering from rabies while she was getting off her carriage after High Mass. Thus death acquires some comic tinge. Such treatment of death serves as a survival

All content of *Bakhtiniana*. Revista de Estudos do Discurso is licensed under a Creative Commons attribution-type CC-BY 4.0

tool for Chicanos, popular laughter helps them to come to terms with the most tragic moments of existence, to combat the fear of the inevitable.

In the marketplace culture carnival fools made the serious comic, turned the high into the low, being the epitome of the grotesque and the carnivalesque. In fact, Hinojosa creates a whole "town of fools" in his fictional universe of Belken County where the carnival spirit reigns supreme and uninterrupted. That is a place where "a drink-here-a-drink-there" Burnias resides (Hinojosa, 2014b, p.53). The town itself is portrayed in contrasting strokes. To begin with, Flora has "the largest, best known and certainly most profitable whorehouse" in Belken County (Hinojosa, 2014a, p.111). Moreover, the citizens of Flora are proud of the fact; they even "claim it as a native invention" (Hinojosa, 2014a, p.111). At the same time, the town of Flora "also boasts of more churches per capita than any other Valley town" (Hinojosa, 2014a, p.111). Thus Hinojosa brings together representations of "the higher stratum" and "the lower stratum of the body" in the town's description.

Another town's achievement is that "Flora people have convinced themselves that they invented sliced bread, this goes for Texas Mexicans and Texas Anglos alike." (Hinojosa, 2014a, p.111) It is significant that Flora is the only place in the Valley where the population seems mentally and spiritually homogeneous. Mexicanos and Anglos do not reveal many differences. For example, Texas Mexicans fought on both sides of the American Civil War. They have similar ideas and produce a similar impression on the people outside the town, who believe that Flora-ites are "hell to deal and live with," and they "won't ever let you keep your own bad breath" (Hinojosa, 2014b, p.53). Unsurprisingly, Flora-ites become the butt of many jokes and mockery of the Valley's inhabitants:

> Anyway, the Texas Anglo and Texas Mexican citizenry of Flora are identical in many ways: noisy, trust in God and give Him credit of Sundays, and believe in cash on the barrelhead from sunup to sundown. They also believe in other important things. Leap years, for one (Hinojosa, 2014a, p.111).

In this example, the author combines anticlimax with wordplay "trust in God… give Him credit… believe in cash… believe in leap years" to highlight people's derision of religion combined with their foolishness, which can't be "cured" either with a pill or a

All content of *Bakhtiniana*. Revista de Estudos do Discurso is licensed under a Creative Commons attribution-type CC-BY 4.0

shot: “There is nothing you can do about stupidity. Takes more than a pill or a shot for that one. But the Flora-ites don’t know this, and if they do, they choose to ignore it” (Hinojosa, 2014a, p.112). Wordplay is also used to describe Mexicanos’ insecurity in the modern community: “Life is fairly cheap in Flora, and if you’re Texas Mexicano, it’s even cheaper than that” (Hinojosa, 2014b, p.64). It can be inferred that Flora is not only disagreeable, but also unsafe to live in. It is a town that accumulates all human weaknesses and tempts people to manifest the worst sides of human nature. Flora practically transforms into a myth of a cursed town which no one wants to approach, and everyone tries to get round. The description of Flora and its citizens reveals the carnivalesque reversal of the high to the position of the low, the grotesque image of the town of fools causes laughter, liberating and universal.

4 Conclusion

We can conclude that in Rolando Hinojosa’s novels the system of images is closely related to a carnival culture, to the culture of popular laughter, which implies ambivalence of human nature. The humor that permeates the narration is universal which makes it akin to marketplace laughter when people mock and deride something or someone and laugh at themselves.

Another manifestation of the carnivalesque in the novels is the denial of authority of the church and the state, the folk laughter of the inhabitants of the Valley displays revolts and reversals. It is also connected with different manifestations of ambivalent human nature. The characters reveal some comic traits which bring them down to earth, making them more humane. The comic characters, who can be seen as town fools, act as some destructive force, passing their bad luck to others. At the same time, they are portrayed as bearers of the truth which is endowed with some potential for renewal and revival. This dual nature of the comic perfectly complies with the Bakhtinian treatment of the carnivalesque.

Within the general framework of the carnivalesque, Hinojosa explores the vivid, life-affirming aspects of Chicano community as well as its dark, death-embracing moments. Death is presented as something grotesque, which serves as some survival mechanism for people, helping them to overcome their fear of the inevitable. The carnival

All content of *Bakhtiniana*. Revista de Estudos do Discurso is licensed under a Creative Commons attribution-type CC-BY 4.0

masks created in the *Klail City Death Trip Series* perform the same function, emphasizing fearlessness and metamorphosis. The image of a ridiculous zoomorphic little man symbolizes the human ability to pass over in laughter the inevitable tragedies of life.

The analysis reveals that carnival laughter affects the system of images; it penetrates the system of characters and permeates the speech structure of the novels. Rolando Hinojosa's narration is contrapuntal and polyphonic, embracing both dark and light, combining separate narratives into a chorus of voices which rises to a collective voice of the Chicano community.

Hinojosa perceives the life and the modern history of Chicanos as carnivalized reality, which is manifested in his art as the grotesque and the carnivalesque. Without doubt, it provides new approaches to understanding the world and man's place in it.

REFERENCES

BAKHTIN, M. *Rabelais and His World*. Translated by Helene Iswolsky. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984a.

BAKHTIN, M. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Edited and translated by Caryl Emerson; introduction by Wayne C. Booth. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984b.

BAKHTIN, M. Dopolneniya i izmeneniya k "Rable" [Additions and Alterations to "Rabelais"]. *Philosophy Issues*, Moscow, v. 1, pp.134-164, 1992. Available at: https://philpapers.org/archive/bakbos.pdf. Access on 17 out. 2021.

BARANOVA, M. Sistema povestvovatelei v romane Rolando Inohosy Klail City [The System of Narrators in Rolando Hinojosa's Klail City]. *LUNN Bulletin*, Nizhny Novgorod, v. 37, n. 1, pp.132-141, 2017. Available at: https://vestnik.lunn.ru/arhiv-zhurnala/2017-god/vypusk-37-1-kvartal-2017-g/37-13/. Access on 17 out. 2021.

COX, H. *The Feast of Fools:* A Theological Essay on Festivity and Fantasy. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1969.

DANOW, D. *The Spirit of Carnival: Magical Realism and the Grotesque*. University Press of Kentucky, 1995.

DZYALOSHINSKY, I. Mediakarnaval v epokhu globalizatsiyi [Mediacarnival in the Epoch of Globalization]. *Media Almanach*, v. 3, p.18-28, 2019.

DUKE DOS SANTOS, M.; DE LA FUENTE, P. The Elliptic Female Presence as Unifying Force in the Novels of Rolando Hinojosa. *In:* SALDÍVAR, J. D. *The Rolando Hinojosa Reader: Essays Historical and Critical.* Houston: Arte Público Press, 1985. p.64-75.

ECO, U; IVANOV, V; RECTOR, M. *Carnival!* Berlin; New York: Mouton Publishers, 1984.

All content of *Bakhtiniana*. Revista de Estudos do Discurso is licensed under a Creative Commons attribution-type CC-BY 4.0

ELENEVSKAYA, M. Dvuyazychnyj yumor immigrantov: yazykovaya igra i social’naya adaptaciya (na primere smekhovoj kul’tury russkoyazychnyh izrail’tyan) [Immigrant’s Bilingual Humor: Language Play and Social Adaptation (the Case of Russian-speaking Israelis)]. *Russian Journal of Linguistics*, n. 3, p.7-27, 2014.

ELIADE, M. *Mif o vechnom vozvraschenii*. Arkhetipu i povrtoryaemost’ [The Myth of the Eternal Return. Archetypes and Repetitiveness]. Spb: Aleteya, 1998.

GRAY, J. *Watching with The Simpsons:* Television, Parody, and Intertextuality. New York: Routledge, 2006.

HERNANDEZ, G. E. *Chicano Satire:* A Study in Literary Culture. Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1991.

HINOJOSA, R. *The Sense of Place, The Rolando Hinojosa Reader*: Essays Historical and Critical. Houston: Arte Público Press, 1985.

HINOJOSA, R. *Klail City / Klail City y sus alrededores.* Bilingual Edition. University of Houston, Texas: Arte Público Press, 2014a.

HINOJOSA, R. *The Valley/ Estampas del valle.* Bilingual Edition. University of Houston, Texas: Arte Público Press, 2014b.

LEE J. G. *The Fictional World of Rolando Hinojosa*. 1993. 177 p. Dissertation (Doctor on Philosophy) – University of North Texas, Denton, 1993.

LIKHACHEV, D; PANCHENKO, A. *Smehovoi mir drevney Rusi* [Ancient Russia Popular Laughter]. Leningrad: Nauka, 1976.

PAZ, O. *The Labyrinth of Solitude.* Translated by L. Kemp. Y. Milos and R. Phillips Belash. New York: Grove Press, 1985.

SALDÍVAR, J. D. Rolando Hinojosa’s Klail City Death Trip: A Critical Introduction. *In:* SALDÍVAR, J. D. *The Rolando Hinojosa Reader*: Essays Historical and Critical. Houston: Arte Público Press, 1985. p.44-63.

SANCHEZ, R. From Heterogeneity to Contradiction: Hinojosa’s Novel. *In:* SALDÍVAR, J. D. *The Rolando Hinojosa Reader*: Essays Historical and Critical. Houston: Arte Público Press, 1985. p.76-100.

VORONCHENKO, T. *Meksikano-amerikanskij fenomen v literature SSHA* [Mexican-American Phenomenon in the USA Literature]. Moscow: MPU, 1992.

Statement of Authorship and Responsibility for Published Content
We declare that the authors had access to the research corpus, participated actively in the discussion of the results, and conducted the review and approval process of the paper’s final version.

Received September 02,2020

Accepted October 17,2021

All content of *Bakhtiniana*. Revista de Estudos do Discurso is licensed under a Creative Commons attribution-type CC-BY 4.0