

The Sacred, the Profane, and Frida Kahlo: A Religious Worldview in the Grotesque Body / *O sagrado, o profano e Frida Kahlo: uma cosmovisão religiosa no corpo grotesco*

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to analyze, from a Bakhtinian perspective, the grotesque construction of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo's body through a religious worldview. Therefore, we analyze two of her self-portraits, taking into account the dialogic relations constructed between the grotesque representations and Catholic symbology. The analyzed utterances, in which the specificities of the creative competence of the author-creator in her aesthetic activity are inferred, showed that a dialogue is established between the painting *El venado herido* and Catholic Saint Sebastian and between the painting *Las dos fridas* and the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

KEYWORDS: Frida Kahlo; Grotesque body; Carnavalesque worldview; Religious worldview; Self-portrait

RESUMO

O presente artigo tem como objetivo analisar, sob a perspectiva bakhtiniana, a construção grotesca do corpo fridiário por meio de uma cosmovisão religiosa. Para tanto, são analisados dois autorretratos produzidos pela pintora mexicana Frida Kahlo, levando em consideração as relações dialógicas construídas entre as representações grotescas e as simbologias católicas. Nos enunciados analisados, nos quais são apreendidas as especificidades da competência criativa da autora-criadora em sua

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atividade estética, percebe-se o correlacionamento entre a pintura El venado herido e a narrativa do santo católico São Sebastião e o diálogo entre a tela Las dos Fridas e a imagem do Sagrado Coração de Jesus.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Frida Kahlo; Corpo grotesco; Cosmovisão carnavalesca; Cosmovisão religiosa; Autorretrato

The body is like a tomb that imprisons us
much as the oyster is caught within the shell.

Frida Kahlo¹

Introduction²

Frida Kahlo's body was the theme of many of her self-portraits. Throughout her life, the Mexican artist fought a real battle against the limitations, the pain, and the difficulties imposed by her body. It was, thus, a female body defeated by polio, crushed by a car accident, and limited by the social place to which it was constrained. However, none of these limiting barriers were strong enough to hinder Frida from transforming her body into a theme and her pain into art.

As the academic production on Kahlo's artistry is large, we highlight just a few: Maria da Penha Casado Alves's (2012a) texts titled "Frida Kahlo entre palavras e imagens: a escrita diarista e o acabamento estético" ["Frida Kahlo between Words and Images: Diary Writing and Aesthetic Finishing"] and "Ethos e exotopia do olhar: as cartas apaixonadas de Frida Kahlo" ["Ethos and Outsideness of Seeing: Frida Kahlo's Love Letters"] – the latter was published in the book *Linguística Aplicada, Linguística e Literatura: Intersecções Profícuas [Applied Linguistics, Linguistics, and Literature: Fruitful Intersections]*; William Brenno dos Santos Oliveira's (2015) master's thesis titled *Um coração que pulsa fora do corpo: imagens passionais nas cartas de Frida Kahlo [A Heart that Beats Outside the Body: Passionate Images in Frida Kahlo's Letters]*, and Diana de Oliveira Mendonça's (2018) master's thesis titled *Letras e cores de um ser inacabado: um olhar bakhtiniano sobre a escrita diarista de Frida Kahlo [Letters and*

¹ Frida's utterance as quoted by Carlos Fuentes. FUENTES, Carlos. Introduction. In: KAHLO, Frida. *The Diary of Frida Kahlo: An Intimate Self-portrait*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1995. p. 13.

² This article, although stemming from the doctorate dissertation of one of the authors, was restructured by all the authors based on an unprecedented unfolding of the research.

Colors of an Unfinished Being: A Bakhtinian Perspective on Frida Kahlo's Diary Writing]. These texts establish a dialogue with this article as they focus on Kahlo's written and pictorial output and help support the analysis of our research object.

Besides, in line with Casado Alves's (2021c) thoughts about the grotesque in Frida Kahlo, we need to mention that "maybe no other woman has placed herself as the theme of her oeuvre in such an open and unreserved way" (Casado Alves, 2021c, p. 200).³ With this understanding, we emphasize the universe of senses that emerge from the different shades on Frida's canvases which transport us to axiological planes in which the grotesque – from a Bakhtinian perspective – becomes a conditioning element to portray "a body that is open to the world, exhibiting the bodily lower stratum, the hybridity of opposing elements, and the inseparableness between humans and animals" (Casado Alves, 2021c, p. 197).⁴

Thus, the epigraph that opens this section mostly reveals Frida's dissatisfaction and nonconformity with her body. Many questions around this painful relationship with her body are raised. At this point of our text, it is important to clarify that her painted and portrayed body, as an axiological image of herself, reflected and refracted in a concrete utterance,⁵ is our corpus of study. In this sense, shaped by the discursive and semiotic web of its constitution, we see a grotesque image that uses a religious worldview in its process of construction.

Therefore, we aim to provide a possible finish to the representation of Frida's female body in two of her self-portraits, utterances in the architectonic space that is axiologically organized and thus refracted in paint and on canvas. Our goal is, thus, to

³ We have translated all the passages whose translation into English has not been published. In Portuguese: "nenhuma mulher, talvez, tenha se colocado como tema em suas obras de forma tão aberta e tão sem reserva."

⁴ In Portuguese: "de um corpo aberto para o mundo, a exposição do baixo corporal, o hibridismo dos elementos antagônicos e a não separação entre o humano e o animal."

⁵ In *The Problem of Speech Genres*, Bakhtin (1986) develops the concept of concrete utterance, based on the notion that language is a social activity mediated by the interaction between individuals in their discourse practices. He understands that such an utterance, as the real unit of human communication, is the constitutive materiality that emerges from the movements of language in use. Not only is it within the varied situational circumstances in which the enunciators, the actively responsive participants of the dynamics of the world of life, are in, but it is also organized by them. In other words, through this epistemological approach, people construct their sayings when dialogically responding to enunciative specificities and the others who surround them, emerging from the communicative situations in which they operate in the concrete reality. BAKHTIN, Mikhail. *The Problem of Speech Genre*. In: BAKHTIN, Mikhail. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist; translated by Vern W. McGee. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986. pp. 60-102.

evince, from a Bakhtinian perspective, how Frida constructs her body when using aesthetic-discursive elements of the grotesque, along with a religious worldview, to consolidate the value-assigning finish of her work of art. We will follow this central investigative idea, for the key element of this study is the examination of the details of Kahlo's authorial activity with regard to the aforementioned phenomenon.

We will then define the place from which we start this article and the voices that support our discourse. Thus, in the following section, we need to define some concepts (mostly from the Bakhtin Circle)⁶ and some terms that are fundamental to our research so that they can assign axiological and academic meaning to our scientific and dialogical work.

1 The Grotesque Body and the Carnavalesque Worldview

Before bringing Bakhtin's (1984)⁷ discussion on Rabelais's work and his thesis about the grotesque body and the carnivalesque worldview, we would like to concisely define the concept of 'grotesque' as the size of this paper is limited. In fact, this is not only about defining the term, but also about indicating our position on the theoretical and methodological choice we have made.

As we start our theoretical reflection, we bring the voice of Mary Russo (1995), in whose book *The Female Grotesque* she briefly summarizes what she understands as grotesque and where we can find it in the world and in society:

The grotesque body is not separated from the rest of the world; "it is blended with the world, with animals, with objects" (RW, 27). Most of all, it is identified with the "lower bodily stratum" (RW, 20) and its associations with degradation, filth, death, and rebirth. The images of the grotesque body are precisely those which are abjected from the bodily canons of classical aesthetics. The classical body is transcendent and monumental, closed, static, self-contained, symmetrical, and sleek; it is identified with the "high" or official culture of the Renaissance and later, with the rationalism, individualism, and normalizing aspirations of the bourgeoisie. The grotesque body is open, protruding, irregular,

⁶ The Bakhtin Circle is the name given to a group of thinkers, such as Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) and Valentin Voloshinov (1895-1936), who reflect about language from a dialogical perspective, as a social and historical practice that stems from the interaction between individuals who are in an ongoing process of verbal and ideological communication.

⁷ BAKHTIN, Mikhail. *Rabelais and his World*. Translated by Helene Iswolsky. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1984.

secreting, multiple, and changing; it is identified with non-official “low” culture or the carnivalesque, and with social transformation (Russo, 1995, p. 8).⁸

The definition of the grotesque body as open, protruding, irregular, secreting, multiple, changing, etc. is not interesting. It creates a familiar terrain for us as researchers and corroborate our thinking and theoretical affiliation. After all, the grotesque body is the most important category we use throughout this article, and it will guide the analysis to be carried out.

Besides, the opposition the author proposes between the grotesque and the classical body makes more relevant our hypothesis that Frida Khalo’s body is grotesque, and thus deviant, and a catalyzer of centrifugal discourses.⁹ Therefore, it is responsible for dissipating and questioning the values that oppressed her as the body of a Latin woman, living in a male chauvinist and patriarchal society in the 20th century.

Throughout her life as a woman and a revolutionist we find traces of a body submitted to social demands that affected her more than illnesses, the accident, or surgeries. Even victimized by tragedies, this female body was under constant pressure to, for example, disguise as fertile and play a maternal role, things for which women are to this day so highly demanded.

As we continue to add new collaborative voices to our discussion, Muniz Sodré and Raquel Paiva’s (2002) book titled *O império do grotesco* [Empire of the Grotesque] is a great contribution. The authors’ definition of the grotesque is relevant and makes chorus with the one brought before. The following passage refers to the “spirit” that hovers over the collective social imaginary:

⁸ RUSSO, Mary J. *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess, and Modernity*. New York: Routledge, 1995.

⁹ We use the term “centrifugal discourse” as a metaphor for the decentralization of official discourses. It is important to highlight that centripetal and centrifugal forces are used by Bakhtin (1981, p. 270) in *Discourse in the Novel* to discuss the forces that are “in the process of creating a life for language.” The centrifugal forces are thus the ones responsible for “the uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunification” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 272). As Orison Marden Bandeira de Melo Jr. (2022, pp. 102-103) explains, the centrifugal forces “create a chasm from the unitary linguistic system and a verbal-ideological decentralization which allows the development of different social-ideological languages (heterodiscourse) in a living and dynamic process.” In Portuguese: “provocam uma separação do sistema linguístico único e uma descentralização verboideológica, permitindo, dessa forma, o desenvolvimento de diferentes linguagens socioideológicas (heterodiscurso) num processo dinâmico e vivo.” BAKHTIN, Mikhail. *Discourse in the Novel*. In: BAKHTIN, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* by M. M. Bakhtin. Edited by Michael Holquist; translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981. pp. 259-422.

Thus, an object can cause repulsion or a strange reaction, and not necessarily be ugly. A good example is Leonardo Da Vinci's drawings of profiles (Physiognomic Sketches), in which the expressive distortions – human faces that look like monkeys, lions, eagles, etc. – can produce adverse effects in the contemplator. However, s/he can find beauty in their force of expression, in the vital wholeness manifested in them. In fact, this is not about being ugly, but *grotesque*, a type of creation that is sometimes confused with fanciful manifestations of the imagination and that almost always makes us laugh (Sodré; Paiva, 2002, p. 19; emphasis in original).¹⁰

This passage is powerful because it brings a classic and very clear example. It also contributes to differentiating the ugly from the grotesque. As we have read, the authors believe that it is perfectly possible to find beauty in the aesthetics of the strange and of the grotesque; besides, it can be confused with some fantasy manifestations of our imagination. They add that the grotesque can provoke laughter, which is potentially powerful and destabilizes official discourse.

Based on this discussion, we should now bring the voice of the Russian author, allowing us to go deep into his theory. Throughout his life as a scholar, professor, and philosopher of language, Bakhtin thought and wrote about the human body – from his first philosophical texts to his masterpiece on Rabelais. In his first writings, he surpasses the scientific and philosophical logic of his time and proposes a theory based on otherness, which is the main guiding principle of his thinking.

In another important instance, the same that can be said about the development of a concept about the grotesque body can also be said about the Bakhtinian worldview in relation to the phenomena that involve the *ideological sign* (Vološinov, 1986).¹¹ This worldview is initially characterized as carnivalesque as the notion of the medieval

¹⁰ In Portuguese: “assim, um objeto pode causar repulsa ou estranhamento do gosto e não ser necessariamente feio. Um bom exemplo está nos perfis desenhados por Leonardo Da Vinci (Esboços Fisiognômicos), em que a presença de distorções expressivas — faces humanas com aparência de macaco, leão, águia, etc. — é capaz de provocar efeitos de antagonismo no contemplador. Apesar disso, este poderá encontrar beleza na sua força de expressão, na plenitude vital que neles se manifesta. Com efeito, não se trata aí do mero feio, mas do grotesco, um tipo de criação que às vezes se confunde com as manifestações fantasiosas da imaginação e que quase sempre nos faz rir.”

¹¹ According to Valentin Vološinov (1986), the sign is a verbal-ideological material whose meaning is connected to the concrete reality in which social-historical individuals are and produce their discourses. In this signic materiality, reflections (the expression of the object or a theme in the world of life with some degree of reliability) and refractions (axiological positions readopted from the enunciators' point of view) of the communicative dynamics of language subjects circulate.
VOLOŠINOV, Valentin. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Translated by Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986.

carnival (the space-time in which Rabelais's narrative is constructed) is also considered. However, we intend to widen its scope to include religiosity.

Thus, in order to think dialogically about the representations of the cultural body in the specific semiosphere of Frida's life, we need Bakhtin's (1984)¹² voice about the grotesque body in Rabelais. In his work titled *Rabelais and his World*, he provides us with comfortable theoretical lenses that are consistent with our research objectives.

We start with the characteristics of the grotesque and its representations identified by Bakhtin (1984). The first one is exaggeration, which, according to him, was trivialized by theoreticians and scholars of his time. Here are his observations about exaggeration:

In the banquet images discussed in the previous chapter we have seen gross exaggeration and hyperbole. Such exaggeration is also inherent in other images of the body's life but is most strongly expressed in picturing the body and food. (...) Exaggeration, hyperbolism, excessiveness are generally considered fundamental attributes of the grotesque style (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 303).¹³

With that in mind, we will focus on the *grotesque style* through the presence of exaggeration when analyzing the corpus of this article. It is possible to say that it will help us find the necessary analytical data, for Frida uses this style excessively whether in the world of life or in the world of art. These ideological stylistic marks carry, in several aspects, the amalgams that we need to confirm our hypothesis and that, in Frida Kahlo, condition the "architectonic form" (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 303)¹⁴ of her oeuvre.

The second characteristic refers to these bodies, which were considered *strange*, or at least caused some discomfort when looking at them. Bakhtin (1984)¹⁵ explains that their appearance was silenced in the world of literature and art of that time. Rabelais was the one who finds a limit between grotesque things and phenomena drawn very differently.

For the Russian author, these grotesque bodies are erased in the static world of art and literature of that time. In short, he believes that individual bodies, considered perfect

¹² For reference, see footnote 7.

¹³ For reference, see footnote 7.

¹⁴ BAKHTIN, Mikhail. The Problem of Content, Material and Form in Verbal Art. Translated by Kenneth Brostrom. In: BAKHTIN, Mikhail. *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays* by M. M. Bakhtin. Edited by Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov; translated by Vadim Liapunov. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990. pp. 257-325.

¹⁵ For reference, see footnote 7.

and admirable by the official discourses, lose the opportunity to be presented as grotesque. The grotesque image seen in its extreme aspect never presents these representations, especially because the *Bakhtinian* grotesque body is formed by orifices and excrescences. Their constitution represents a new body that is about to be conceived as a subject. In a way, this grotesque element in the body brings to light the double-exit passage in a life that is eternally renewed. On this topic Bakhtin (1984, p. 308)¹⁶ points out that

The pregnant and two-bodied images could not be grasped (...) [and] in the grotesque world of becoming, the limits between objects and phenomena are drawn quite differently than in the static world of art and literature of his time.

We must also discuss the third characteristic, that is, the topography of the grotesque body. This is extremely important as it triggers ambivalence, the material bodily lower stratum, and gives us the dimension of what goes from the high stratum to the low stratum in the body and in the axiological relations in the world of life. The grotesque inverts such order – between high and low. It thus dethrones the dominant discourse and, at the same time, regenerates it. In this sense, the entire body topography can be altered, given the elements and the instruments of the grotesque Bakhtin found in Rabelais.

Therefore, Bakhtin's (1984)¹⁷ analysis of the example we bring below represents his idea very well. In dialogue with another critic of his time, he carries out an in-depth analysis of a scene from the Italian *commedia dell'arte*, namely, a stutterer *giving birth* to a word. It represents the logic of inversion that is so dear to the ambivalent and ideologically marked carnival grotesque.

This is how Bakhtin (1984, p. 309)¹⁸ describes and justifies it:

We further see the essential topographical element of the bodily hierarchy turned upside down; the lower stratum replaces the upper stratum. The word is localized in the mouth and in the head (thought); from there it is transferred to the abdomen and is pushed out under the impact of Harlequin's head. This traditional gesture of the head ramming the abdomen or the buttocks is essentially topographical. Here once more we have the logic of opposites, the contact of the upper and the lower level. We have also an exaggeration: the symptoms produced

¹⁶ For reference, see footnote 7.

¹⁷ For reference, see footnote 7.

¹⁸ For reference, see footnote 7.

by the stutterer's distress (tension of the eyes, sweat) are increased to such an extent as to typify childbirth. Thus the entire mechanism of the word is transferred from the apparatus of speech to the abdomen. An objective analysis of this brief scene discloses the fundamental and essential traits of the grotesque. It reveals a great wealth and fullness of meaning, worked out to the smallest detail.

The fourth characteristic involves the limits that separate concrete objects, images, and the outside world, and, based on a grotesque logic, that unite them. This is exactly where we find the analysis whose relationship between body and the outside world is a central element to Bakhtin's development of his arguments. It becomes clear that Bakhtin examined – in more depth than any other theoretician of his time and, dare we say, ours – a more dynamic and living notion of the relationship between bodies and the outside world where these bodies are constituted and refracted.

We should now focus on another scene from Rabelais's text that Bakhtin analyzes. For him, this trace of the grotesque on images, bodies, and the fusion between the outside world and ideological elements populate the social imaginary found in *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. The scene is in Chapter 45 of Book 1, in which Friar John asks the pilgrims

(...) and the monks, what cheer make they? By G— body, they'll have a fling at your wives (...) whilst you are upon your roaming rant and gadding pilgrimage. (...) Let me be peppered with the pox, if you find not all your wives with child at your return; for the very shadow of the steeple of an abbey is fruitful (Rabelais, 1952, p. 53).¹⁹

Regarding Rabelais's image of the steeple of the abbey, Bakhtin (1984, pp. 310-311)²⁰ states that

This image immediately introduces us to the logic of the grotesque. This is no mere exaggeration of monastic "depravity." The object transgresses its own confines, ceases to be itself. The limits between the body and the world are erased, leading to the fusion of the one with the other and with surrounding objects. (...) All these elements of speech create a specific, free atmosphere. Most of them are directly linked to the lower stratum; they lend a bodily character to objects and degrade them, fuse the body and the world, thus introducing the concluding theme: the transformation of the belfry into a phallus.

¹⁹ RABELAIS, François. *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. Translated by Sir Thomas Urquhart and Peter Motteux. Chicago: William Benton, Publisher, 1952.

²⁰ For reference, see footnote 7.

The fifth characteristic is the movement and the unfinishedness of the grotesque body. It dialogues with many other categories of Bakhtin's theory, such as his understanding of subject, ethics, and aesthetics. The unfinishedness of the being reverberates in the unfinishedness of the body, in the everlasting transformation of the grotesque body into that which is necessary to evoke the movement of life and death, dethroning and elevation. This characteristic is emphasized by the author several times during his analysis of the grotesque image in Rabelais.

This is a body that moves, encounters, and contacts other bodies with which several dialogical relations are established. In this vein, we bring Bakhtin's (1984, p. 317)²¹ voice once again:

The grotesque body, as we have often stressed, is a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body. Moreover, the body swallows the world and is itself swallowed by the world (let us recall the grotesque image in the episode of Gargantua's birth on the feast of cattle-slaughtering).

Bakhtin's thinking legitimates in a certain way our dialogical and dialectical comparison as we examine the body Frida shows and the finish she gives to her self-portraits. Our gaze and our bodies establish a dialogue with these utterances and seek to perceive her body as grotesque and dethroning, built through and constituted by ambivalence.

To end this discussion about the characteristics of the grotesque body, we would like to point out another feature Bakhtin brings: everything that is internal and visceral in the physical and biological body is shown externally:

(...) the grotesque ignores the impenetrable surface that closes and limits the body as a separate and completed phenomenon. The grotesque image displays not only the outward but also the inner features of the body: blood, bowels, heart and other organs. The outward and inward features are often merged into one (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 318).²²

²¹ For reference, see footnote 7.

²² For reference, see footnote 7.

Denying the inner features of the body, which is required by the beautiful and the aesthetically admired and approved, moves the grotesque away and somehow tries to transform it either in caricature or in a mark of tragedy and deviation. When the grotesque body becomes internal and shows viscera, organs, intestines, excrescences, and all the material bodily lower stratum, the external and the internal merge into a single image. Besides, in the interaction between other bodies and ideologies,²³ an entire process of destabilizing the official and oppressive image occurs.

Therefore, we believe that in the utterances we analyze in this paper we find many of these manifestations of the grotesque found by the Russian author in Rabelais. We will seek to make this clear when we analyze two utterances and confirm the hypothesis presented in the Introduction. We believe that there may be, under the aegis of the amalgam of Frida/body/images, a grotesque body and a carnivalesque and religious worldview whose unifying and vivifying task is to dethrone the logic of the female body at a time when women were subjected and relegated to the basements of history.

Before we do that, however, we would like to turn our discussion specifically to and focus a little bit more on Bakhtin's worldview. It is important to highlight that the notion of the carnivalistic sense of the world is central to Bakhtin's analysis of *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. Based on it, we feel comfortable expanding the boundaries of what the Russian philosopher did when analyzing Rabelais and moving to other social places where signs play a fundamental role in communication: in art, journalism, schools, politics, religion, etc. This is the reason why transposing this concept to other spheres of production is not only important to conduct our analysis, but also necessary to solidify Bakhtin's voice today.

In this vein, we would like to highlight Bakhtin's voice when he defines the carnivalistic sense of the world, which he saw in some genres and in Rabelais's oeuvre:

This carnival sense of the world possesses a mighty life-creating and transforming power, an indestructible vitality. Thus even in our time those genres that have a connection, however remote, with the traditions

²³ Vološinov (1983, p. 113; emphasis in original) states that "By ideology we have in mind the whole totality of the *reflections and refractions in the human brain* of social and natural reality, as it is expressed and fixed by man in word, drawing, diagram or other form of sign." In short, ideology is the social, historical, and cultural values with which people form their individual conscience and act in society. It thus corroborates the multi-direction signs that exist in human life.

VOLOŠINOV, Valentin. What is language? Translated by Noel Owen. In: SHUKMAN, Ann (ed.). *Bakhtin School Papers*. Oxford: RTP Publications, 1983. pp. 93-113.

of the serio-comical preserve in themselves the carnivalistic leaven (ferment), and this sharply distinguishes them from the medium of other genres. These genres always bear a special stamp by which we can recognize them. The sensitive ear will always catch even the most distant echoes of a carnival sense of the world (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 107).²⁴

As we analyze some of Frida's utterances, we find this carnivalistic sense of the world (worldview) in them, but we also find a religious worldview that gets connected to the grotesque body. Together they carry out the processes of ambivalence, the debasing of what is considered standard, and the reification of what is considered dirty, low, invalid, or freakish. It is through this *fusion*, and due to the force of discourse, that Frida painted – when fighting ideological battles – a form of female body that causes a feeling of unfamiliarity and admiration, a body endowed with a terrifying beauty.

Now we will discuss Frida's body, the theme of the next section. We will try to discursively draw it and situate it socially and historically so we can do justice to the theoretical choices we have made and the path we have followed so far.

2 Frida's Body

The place where Frida most visibly elaborates and re-elaborates the fractures, viscera, pain, and the broken bones of her body is indeed her paintings and her diary. They can be described as great self-portraits, a whole self-portrait, a great mural of her own existence, and a shameless painting. On the canvas and pages these are prominently portrayed: the broken spine, the hospital bed, the adapted bed, the pelvis, the plaster and the bandages, the needles, steel corsets, trophic ulcers... However, there are other places where Frida recomposes and finishes her body, where the paintings and her diary writing converge: the place of the restless and nonconventional sexuality, the epistolary place, and the place for doctor appointments. For this paper, out of these enunciative possibilities, we are interested in the representation of Frida's body in her self-portraits.

At first, it is important to look at her body, ideologically represented in her self-portraits, and not to justify the exaggerations based on her sole *surrealist* affiliation, as she herself denied any classification of her work. It is important to consider the visual and

²⁴ BAKHTIN, Mikhail. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Edited and translated by Caryl Emerson; introduction by Wayne C. Booth. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

metaphoric hyperboles also as a trace of the grotesque in her body representations on the canvas we will analyze. Discussing exaggeration, Bakhtin (1984, p. 307)²⁵ states that “(...) hyperbole is one of the attributes of the grotesque (...). However, it is not its essential attribute.” Thus, we consider hyperboles as a trace of the grotesque, but we cannot reduce them to mere marks of its presence.

The grotesque body – and we argue that it is on Fridas’s canvas – that we analyze dialogues with prior utterances and the outside world. Its composition is not finished, and it is traversed by the horrors of physical and affective pain. In this sense, we understand the body, represented in *La columna rota* [The Broken Column], as an ideological refraction of the pains that the artist experienced in her identity self. The body absorbs – literally or otherwise – the world that constituted Frida Kahlo and was constituted by her.

Bakhtin (1993)²⁶ states that every discourse is two-sided: it is determined by the fact that it is uttered by somebody and the fact that it is directed to somebody, which makes it internally dialogized. In this dialogical process, the word, as an *ideological sign*, as Vološinov (1986)²⁷ puts it, reflects (and refracts) the encounter of at least two individual consciousness that are socially constituted in the permanent interaction between the ‘I’ and the ‘Other.’

In the wake of what Bakhtin (1981)²⁸ understands as social heterodiscourse,²⁹ that is, the diversity of social languages that penetrate a heterodiscursive novel, voices are intrinsically connected to the discourse subjects, that is, individuals who are socially, historically, and temporally situated, but, more than that, to the relationships that are established between these individuals (speaker or listener), or to their discourses (uttered or otherwise). To discuss ‘voice,’ it is necessary to refer to it as social voices because no one, as an individual conscience, is constituted by themselves, for the organizing and constitutive center of one’s conscience is not in their inner self, in their mind, but in the outside world through the relationship they establish with other subjects, who are also

²⁵ For reference, see footnote 7.

²⁶ BAKHTIN, Mikhail. *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*. Edited by Vadim Liapunov and Michael Holquist; translated by Vadim Liapunov. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1993.

²⁷ For reference, see footnote 11.

²⁸ For reference, see footnote 9.

²⁹ TN. We are using Paulo Bezerra’s translation of the term *raznoréchie* [heterodiscourse] instead of the term ‘heteroglossia,’ which is how Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist translated it in the essay *Discourse in the Novel* (Bakhtin, 1981). For reference, see footnote 9.

constituted by values, life stories, and different ways to understand and see the world. It is with this understanding that Caryl Emerson (1984, p. xxxvi) explains that voice is “a point of view on the world, it is one personality orienting itself among other personalities within a limited field.” Pam Morris (1994, p. 251) adds that a voice will always have “a particular ‘intonation’ (...) or ‘accentuation’ (...), which reflects the values behind the consciousness which speaks.”

It is worth pointing out that in every domain of life and ideological creation, our discourses are permeated by the voices of others – in all degrees of precision, impartiality, appropriation, and retransmission. We must, therefore, examine how these voices, these social discourses enter into dialogue, how they reject or confirm themselves – not only within the confines of artistic creation, but also through the dialogue they establish with the outside world, which ends up penetrating the work of art (also) as constitutive material.

After discussing the grotesque body and voice, we now proceed to the analysis of the corpus in the following section.

3 Religious Worldview and the Grotesque Body, Allowing a Symbiosis between the Sacred and the Profane in the World of Life

In this section we analyze an utterance that is discursively and semiotically constituted by the *traumas* of Frida’s body. It is shown in a grotesque way to regenerate its interlocutors and her own pain, and it is attached to a religious worldview to create ambivalence. Through bodily grotesque traces, Frida chooses to establish dialogical relations between the sacred and the profane. She decides to sacralize and elevate her relationship with the culture of her people and her own ideological convictions. Through an ethically engaged position, she seeks to show what pain has done to a woman’s body and how this theme is given form in the work of art.

Before the analysis per se, we would like to point out that, although the self-portraits we analyze are in public domain in Mexico, only in 2025 will they be copyright-free in Brazil. This is the reason why the images will not be displayed in this paper. However, we will refer to the self-portraits, describing both utterances in detail; besides, we will show the access links to the images. Having clarified that, we should now proceed to the analysis of the first self-portrait, which will be called *Utterance 1* – due to the

methodological and theoretical path we have chosen to follow. The self-portrait is titled *El venado herido* [*The Wounded Deer*].³⁰

Before any analytical comment, we need to briefly describe it. Its physical dimension is 22.4 cm × 30 cm (8.8 in × 12 in). Painted in 1946, it is an oil on masonite painting that belongs to Kahlo's private collection. The translation of its original title is *The Wounded Deer*, but it is also known as *The Little Deer*.

Briefly, Kahlo makes a portrait of herself as a deer by adding her head to the animal body. Surprised in the forest by invisible hunters, the animal is portrayed as being pierced by nine arrows. From the place where the arrow pierces the neck, the animal's blood gushes abundantly – a subtle difference from the other eight arrows that pierced different parts of the body. Although we also see blood in the other parts of Frida-deer's body, the one that pierced the area around the chest – as if the arrow would pierce the heart – is the one that stands out. However, none of the little deer's "enemies" seem to hinder it from fleeing. In the background, we see a bolt of lightning and a broken branch that add drama to the painting.

For a dialogical analysis of this utterance, we need to specifically name the category we have chosen based on the theoretical-methodological intersection between the grotesque body and the religious worldview, namely, *ambivalence*. This ambivalence between *dethroning and renewal* is created by the *heterodiscursivity of the body's topography and the signs of Christianity*.

This category is most latent in this utterance, for the close dialogue between culture, Frida's grotesque body, and religious discourse is axiologically and semiotically visible to us as researchers. In particular, we understand that the utterance carries signs and symbols, but our focus is on the dialogical relation between ambivalence and the sacred: the axiological relations with the myth of Saint Sebastian.³¹ The classic painting of Saint Sebastian shows a naked man tied to a tree and pierced by three arrows. The first one pierces the left side of his chest, reaching his heart; the second one pierces his abdomen, and the third, his right leg. Blood gushes from the places pierced by the arrows.

³⁰ This utterance is the fourth self-portrait on Roberta Fuks's website titled *10 principais obras de Frida Kahlo (e seus significados)* [*Frida Kahlo's Ten Main Works (and their Meaning)*], found at <https://www.culturagenial.com/obras-frida-kahlo/>.

³¹ Saint Sebastian's image can be found at https://cruzterrasanta.com.br/global/ssf/ssf.aspx?d=/upload/significados_de_santos/&arquivo=20160112191132-HIS-sao-sebastiao-historia.jpg.

Therefore, we can argue that there are two elements that connect *Utterance 1* and Saint Sebastian's myth, namely, the arrows and the sacrifice.

According to different biographies found in some websites of the Catholic Church, such as The Vatican News, Sebastian was born in Narbona, France, in 256 CE. As a young man, he joined the army and soon won the affection of Emperor Diocletian, becoming thus his favorite soldier. He was also elevated to the position of chief commander of the of the Praetorian Guard, a position that placed him much closer to the emperor.

Legend says that he converted to Christianity secretly and often visited incarcerated Christians who awaited to be sent to the Colosseum in order to become food for the lions or be killed in fights against the gladiators. However, his kindness towards Christians reached the ears of the emperor. Diocletian was known for persecuting Christians and immediately tried to make Sebastian renounce his religion.

As Sebastian refused to renounce his faith before the emperor, he was sentenced to death. His body was tied to a tree and pierced by arrows shot by his fellow members of the Praetorian Guard. He was left nearly dead but was rescued by some women and managed to recover.

Legend still says that, even afterwards, Sebastian continued to insist that the emperor stopped persecuting and killing Christians. In rage, Diocletian had the soldiers whip him to death and dispose of his body in a sewer in Rome so that he would not become a martyr. However, some women dreamed with the young soldier and, according to Catholic narratives, were revealed, by Sebastian himself, of the location of his body. They were also asked to bury his body next to the catacombs of the apostles. After that, in the 4th century, Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity and ordered the construction of a basilica where Sebastian's tomb was. This is when religious functions in his honor and devotion started to be held.

We can thus establish dialogical relations between deer-Frida and Saint Sebastian in his martyrdom, especially when he is portrayed with arrows piercing his body and tied to a tree. Different from the Catholic saint, Frida's deer is not tied. However, if we look closely to it, Frida's apparent freedom is false as the deer is stuck in a type of tree maze, which hinders it from fleeing and makes it an easy target of its hunters' arrows. Ambivalence occurs precisely when Frida, in a process of refraction, axiologically takes

the position of the Catholic saint; in other words, a communist female artist is now the target of the arrows of persecution.

Another point of intersection between the narratives (Saint Sebastian's and Frida's self-portrait) is the number of arrows: nine, which is the number of trees on the left side of the portrait and the number of deer antler tips. In Catholic tradition, number nine has a sacred meaning: it means the perfection of the trinity, which is revered three times (the father, the son, and the holy ghost separately) by the followers. This is the reason why this cycle of masses is called novena, for it completes the perfect number necessary for praising the Catholic god in monotheist services.

Thus, Frida activates the religious discourse vehemently in an ambivalence play that aims to break with the unattainable or intangible divine. She intends to transform her own life into martyrdom and, in this sense, to humanize and deify the sacrifices of the women and men of her time.

Another element of convergence between both portraits, which goes beyond the theme and composes the grotesque, is the use of strange bodies in the composition of the images. We refer to the body Frida paints, that is, her own: an animal with a woman's head, which produces a feeling of uneasiness in her interlocutors. Chosen and constructed by the artist, this uneasiness brings the mark of the Bakhtinian grotesque, that is, a body that is totally strange and is marked either by irregularity or by the scape from what is considered normal or aesthetically beautiful.

In this sense, the grotesque element is responsible for causing a break and delimiting the presence of a body that is visually uncomfortable and whose condition of existence is silencing and imprisonment, for social interaction was denied to it. The same happened to the bodies of people with disabilities during the Middle Ages: their grotesque bodies were hidden in their homes with no social life. They could also be exhibited at fairs as exotic and grotesque attractions, provoking laughter, and serving for financial exploitation. Deer-Frida is, to a certain degree, marked by the Bakhtinian grotesque because this is the ideological instrument that is necessary to delimit its relationship with the religious worldview.

Regarding Saint Sebastian's portrait, as opposed to Frida's, the high (the sacred) and the low (the common) are present. Through their own contour and finish, the artist takes upon themselves to portray a sacred narrative and bring it to the plane of

commonness and humanity, an image that represents the human sacrifice of a Catholic saint. In this vein, Frida connects the plane of the sacred – considered divine and, many times, untouchable by Catholic followers – to the plane of the ordinary, thus “tarnishing” it, that is, bringing it down (to the earthly plane, where mortals meet), an unattainable moment in Catholic tradition. By becoming similar to the Catholic saint, through her grotesque body and sacrifice, the artist dethrones the impossibility of being considered, like any other woman, the honorable sacrifice of her own narrative. In other words, she relives the glory of her extremely human journey.

Moreover, Frida specifically attempts to place herself as an easy prey to life dilemmas or to a male chauvinist and capitalist society in which she lived – which is still true. As researchers, we must highlight her intent of becoming a discursive mark of the refracted religious worldview in order to validate a discourse. The worldview which Frida accesses is, therefore, the necessary seal for her utterance and is what fosters the thematic connectedness that makes the utterance break with official discourses.

We should now examine the second utterance (*Utterance 2*), part of our corpus. It is a portrait titled *Las dos Fridas* [*The Two Fridas*].³² It is an oil-on-canvas portrait, painted in 1939, whose dimension is 173.5 cm × 173 cm (68.3 in × 68 in). Out of her oeuvre, this portrait is considered one of the most important and relevant. It portrays two Fridas who are side by side; besides, both fix their apparently sad and melancholic gaze at the interlocutors. We must now provide readers with a brief but necessary description of the whole utterance.

In *Utterance 2*, we see that the figure on the right wears a typically Mexican outfit in shades of blue, yellow and green; a low-cut blouse, exposing the chest and neck, and a long skirt with a white pleated hem (made with a fabric that looks like tulle); the figure on the left wears only one shade of white throughout her outfit (it looks like a dress that is divided into two parts): the top part is a blouse full of bows, a variation of fabrics and puffed sleeves, and a long collar that covers the entire neck; the bottom part is a long skirt with a pleated hem and very small details, in shades of red, wine, black, and yellow (colors that make the images resemble flowers, leaves, birds, and berries).

³² This utterance is the first self-portrait on Roberta Fuks’s website titled *10 principais obras de Frida Kahlo (e seus significados)* [*Frida Kahlo’s Ten Main Works (and their Meaning)*], found at <https://www.culturagenial.com/obras-frida-kahlo/>.

It is worth highlighting that both figures are seated on a green handmade bench and hold hands. A cloudy dark sky in the background seems to announce a storm. Another very important element to our analysis is their hearts: both women's hearts are exposed and directly connected by a single artery that spirals down the left arm of the Frida on the right, winds its way through her heart to the heart of Frida on the left, spiraling down her right arm. The Frida on the right holds a miniature portrait, which seems the beginning or the end of the artery that binds them. Drops of blood fall on the white skirt of the Frida on the left, while she holds a surgical tool in the shape of scissors, whose main purpose is to stop the heavy bleeding, temporarily controlled.

The semioses that activate the religious worldview are many; they are very well highlighted and delimited in this utterance. Thus, they use signs of this universe (sphere of production) to prompt an axiologically marked, carnivalistic, and grotesque dialogue with Mexican culture and Frida's world of life. These clues alert us to the presence of this value-assigning mark and the dialogical relations that we approach here as religious worldview. They are a *sine qua non* condition for the artist's architectonics within the purview of her interest. We believe that without this worldview the path pictorially taken by Frida could lead her to a different outcome.

We should now focus on the traces that comprise this fruitful dialogue to Frida Kahlo's project of saying. It is a dialogue with the semioses of the Catholic world, whose basis is relevant to construct a grotesque body that rejects standardizing and patriarchal voices, which aimed to colonize society's thinking about the female body.

Our starting point is the colors used for the pictorial composition of the utterance. They vary between the shades of white, blue, yellow, gray, red, and green. The choice of colors itself has a lot to say, but we will focus on the religious sense of the world. There is indeed a close dialogue with the colors of Catholic saints and their attire: blue is the color of Our Lady's Mantle; white is the one that means purification and is present in most attires of the Catholic deities; yellow is the color of the deities' halos (e.g., Jesus Christ and Saint Sebastian) and establishes, thus, a direct link with the riches of the spiritual world. Red is also very recurrent in the Christian narrative of the son of the Creator (Jesus Christ). It refers to the blood that Jesus shed for the sins of humanity and corresponds to the very representation of life.

As to the images, we can argue that a very close relationship between Frida's utterance and the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is established. The latter also exposes this vital organ and, after the events of the crucifixion and resurrection of this character of Christian mythology, is without protection. In Utterance 2 we find two Fridas exposing their hearts: the Frida who is a typical Mexican woman, and the Frida who is under European and colonizing influences, which include religious ones. We believe that we should go beyond the reference to romantic love, evoked by the cultural representation of the heart in mass culture, for clear dialogical relations can be established between the self-portrait and the Catholic images that expose the hearts of their saints.

Once again and similar to Utterance 1, Frida portrays her body through elements that connect it to the Bakhtinian grotesque. As we have discussed, according to Bakhtin (1984),³³ one of the main characteristics of the grotesque is the exposure of organs and fluids, which, based on the beautiful and perfect patterns of classic art, belong to the internal part of the body and must, therefore, not be shown. Frida, in her turn, exposes two hearts, arteries and blood, which gushes on her white dress, and thus underscores the image of a grotesquely constructed body. She does so by breaking with patterns and refracting a person who is hurt, open (cut with scissors, a sharp object), and expels a liquid that is vital to life.

The dialogue with the image of heart of Jesus³⁴ is thus inevitable, for, according to the biblical passage, the Christian god had his heart pierced by a spear of a Roman soldier.³⁵ Blood and water came out of his body, which was violently open. In this sense, the religious worldview encompasses the entire discourse produced by Frida in *Las Dos Fridas* [*The Two Fridas*], for the artist adopts the axiological position of Jesus, who

³³ For reference, see footnote 7.

³⁴ The painting known as the Sacred Heart of Jesus can be found at <https://santhatela.com.br/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/pintor-barroco-desconhecido-sagrado-coracao-de-jesus-d.jpg>.

³⁵ The biblical passage about the piercing of Jesus is John 19: 34: "Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water" (Novo Testamento, 1998, p. 314). We see that the text refers explicitly to Christ's side (*pleurá*) and not his heart. However, some scholars believe that his 'side' is the left side and, consequently, the heart. According to Festus Akinnifesi (2005, p. 161), the Roman Soldier wanted to be sure that Jesus was dead and thus used a spear that was "as sharp as a blade and sliced through his very heart ('the side')." This version (heart not the side) becomes part of the Catholic tradition, in which the devotion to the sacred heart of Jesus is based on the presupposition that it was the heart (not the side) that was pierced by the spear. This offers lessons to the faithful, as Benjamin A. Vima (2012) affirms, for "It encourages us, as Jesus' heart was pierced so that His love might flow on all, we must let our own hearts be open to love with totality and offer all our love for the good of Christ's Body, the Church." NOVO Testamento. João. In: *Novo Testamento trilíngue*: grego, português, inglês. Editado por Luiz Alberto Teixeira Sayão. São Paulo: Vida Nova, 1998.

allowed Himself to be sacrificed to save humanity. In this position Frida refracts the idea that her self-sacrifice can be compared to Jesus's – as to Saint Sabastian's.

Both Fridas can represent the conflicting identities of the artist (indigenous under European influence) that fought with her passionate desire to please her beloved Diego Rivera. However, there is also a clear reference to the women in biblical and mythical narratives, namely Eve and Lilith, who brought the *original sin* to the center of paradise and were punished by God for their *rebellious* attitudes.

Eve, according to the biblical narrative, was the first woman (that is, the one presented in official discourses) in paradise. Her image is entirely constructed through guilt, for she was responsible for eating the *forbidden fruit* and giving it to Adam, a man created in the image and likeness of the Christian god. As she was created from one of this man's ribs, she was "expected" to behave with perfection. Besides, she was also a component of the spectrum of divine creation and subservience to the created male. However, going against divine warnings, Eve becomes the key that changes the whole creationism narrative as she gains the status of *villain*, responsible for the first sin.

Lilith, on the other hand, came before Eve and was erased from the Catholic records due to the rebellious nature of her actions. In general terms, she would have left paradise because she did not accept the subservience that was imposed on her by patriarchal tenets whose main principle placed her in an inferior position in relation to Adam. Therefore, the *first woman* in fact rebelled against the Christian god and the rules of his *paradise*, becoming, thus, a demonic figure to Judeo-Christian ideology. Her revolutionary act generated a historical erasure of her narrative, a warlike attempt to prevent this behavior from being reproduced by other women.

In conclusion, this worldview, which is infused by the carnivalesque, is fundamental to Frida's utterance. It contributes to constructing a grotesque body that can deconstruct official discourses. Without it, the dethroning of religious ideologies, used to imprison female bodies and leave them to the abyss of male chauvinism and patriarchy, would never fully occur. Therefore, the hypothesis we proposed in the Introduction is confirmed, for it was possible to notice how Frida appropriates elements of the religious worldview – which bear traces of the Bakhtinian grotesque – to solidify characteristics of the grotesque refracted in the utterances we analyzed. Thus, she debases the sacrosanct,

making it become human, and she does so through the dialogue she establishes between the sacrifices of the Catholic saints and her own sacrifice.

Possible (Un)Finishedness

We have reached this moment in our paper when we can draw some conclusions. We cannot lose sight, especially now, of what is most important in this research: the fact that we are creating intelligibility and producing more knowledge about the artistic output of one of the most renowned artists, engaged with working class causes, history has ever seen.

This is our first conclusion: the discourses that traverse Frida in her entire constitution as a social being are evoked with the purpose of giving an axiological color to her self-portraits, especially when they dialogue with her physical pain, and the religious and cultural influence in her work.

The second one refers, precisely, to the marking and use of a carnivalesque worldview, which, in its turn, is seen as adapted to a religious worldview, making the changes that are necessary and fraught with meaning in Frida's entire architectonics. This sense of the world, which at her time meant a dominant discourse, filled with power relations, is tirelessly accessed by Frida, for it is crucial to create the necessary ambivalence when constructing this grotesque body, represented on the canvas and through discourse.

We must also underscore the importance of this worldview to the corpus we analyzed as it is well-known and popular worldwide. It still has the power to deliver the social human being, a language-being, from fear. In this case, it promoted Frida's body to the position of a banner of fight and debasement of social and oppressing patterns. Therefore, the carnival worldview tends to deny and oppose any and every discourse that is self-interested, iniquitous, finished, and axiomatically closed. In this sense, we can state that this worldview denies conclusive and absolute endings, once there is no end point for the ideological language phenomena – every end indicates a new beginning.

Our third conclusion, which is not less important, refers to how this grotesque body is constituted and uses this religious worldview as a carnivalizing resource to determine what is necessary for the grotesque to exist. Frida overuses grotesque images

– on purpose or otherwise – because they are the only ones capable of reflecting and refracting her own body, desacralizing social dictates on women’s bodies and de-essentializing the bodily dynamics of what can or cannot be “seen” or exposed. Without the resources of the grotesque body, interwoven with a religious worldview that had to be constantly denied by the artist, the aesthetic rupture promoted by Frida Kahlo’s art would possibly fail in its political, discursive, and artistic objectives.

Finally, as Kahlo represents her own body on canvas, she guides her pictorial output to a plane of meaning that refracts elements of the Bakhtinian grotesque as well as a religious worldview that was predominant at her time. By doing so, she gives a proper finish to her experiences through concrete utterances that she puts into circulation in the world of life. Thus, even if we take into consideration the chronotope in which her self-portraits we produced and exhibited, we cannot but highlight, based on our analysis, the axiological power of her artistic work.

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Statement of Authors' Contribution

William Brenno dos Santos Oliveira designed the project that supported the development of the paper, actively participating in the theoretical, methodological, and analytical elaboration of the article, being responsible for finalizing the content of the analysis of each utterance. Maria da Penha Casado Alves and Orison Marden Bandeira de Melo Júnior outlined and guided the conception of the project that fostered the development of this text. Orison Melo Júnior was also the translator of this text and conducted a critical review that contributed to a meaningful theoretical-methodological argumentation based on the Bakhtinian approach. Matheus Silva de Souza was responsible for a general revision of the text as well as its adaptation to the journal's guidelines. In general terms, but also in specific cases, he contributed to improving the formal, theoretical, and methodological aspects of the paper. Renata Karolyne Gomes Coutinho carried out a thorough revision of the text in terms of grammatical norms and the journal's guidelines. In general terms, but also in specific cases, she contributed to improving the formal, theoretical, and methodological aspects of the paper. Júlia Dayane Ribeiro da Costa carried out a critical revision of the intellectual content of the paper, contributing, in general terms, but also in specific cases, to improving the formal, theoretical, and methodological aspects of the paper, especially in relation to a meaningful analytical support of the Dialogical Analysis of Discourse (DAD).

Research Data and Other Materials Availability

The contents underlying the research text are included in the manuscript.

Reviews

Due to the commitment assumed by *Bakhtiniana*. Revista de Estudos do Discurso [*Bakhtiniana*. Journal of Discourse Studies] to Open Science, this journal only publishes reviews that have been authorized by all involved.

Review I

I believe the article is fully suitable for publication at *Bakhtiniana*, as the study proposal is based on a solid theoretical framework; the argumentation is clear and coherently constructed throughout the article, and the analyzed object constitutes a relevant topic to society today. Given the specificities of Bakhtin's grotesque, the author(s) worked very well with a concept that has not yet been widely discussed in Brazil. Great job. ACCEPTED.

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