



Conceptual Article

Defining advertising: A carnivalesque perspective

Gulnara Z. Karimova

Kazakhstan Institute of Management, Economics and Strategic Research, Almaty, Kazakhstan
Email: gulnara.z.karimova@google.com

Using the concepts of literary criticism advanced by Mikhail Bakhtin, this paper provides an alternative methodology for reading advertising text and demonstrates how carnival culture is incorporated advertising texts, such as an on-line commercial for JBS Men's underwear, and print advertisements for Glassing Sunglasses and Mattel-Scrabble. Carnavalesque analysis suggests that advertising has always been part of popular culture and is influenced by earlier carnivalesque forms. When analyzed within the carnivalesque framework, advertising text can be understood not only in terms of a cultural narrative reproducing the capitalist social order, but also running counter to dominant capitalist ideology. This paradox has an important implication on how one perceives and defines advertising.

Keywords: Advertising, Bakhtin, carnival, laughter, popular culture

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INTRODUCTION

Various textual practices have been interpreted within the Bakhtinian framework of carnival, including films, such as *The Big Lebowski* (Martin & Renegar, 2007), *Terminator*, *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* and *12 Monkeys* (Dimitrakaki & Tsiantis, 2002); 1950s British comedies (Sobchack, 1996); the animated series *The Simpsons* (Gray, 2006); the news and entertainment journal *The Onion* (Achter, 2008), horror fiction such as *The Shining* (Holland-Toll, 1999), and *Frankenstein; The Modern Prometheus* (Holquist, 1994); TV program *Jackass* (Brayton, 2007); and the political campaign of Jesse Ventura (Janack, 2006). These carnivalesque interpretations have classified popular culture in many different ways: as escapist, as resistant to the ideology of capitalism, containing "visions of utopia, collectivity or even emancipation" (Dimitrakaki & Tsiantis 2002: 209). Although advertising is one of the most ubiquitous manifestations of popular culture (Jowett, 1996: XI), it has never been examined as a form of resistance to the ideology of capitalism. On the contrary, advertising is seen as central to the reproduction of capitalist social order (Jhally, 2000). However, the concept of carnival

can form an analytical framework that views advertising as containing ambiguous voices that support and at the same time, resist the dominant ideology of capitalism. Thus, a carnivalesque analysis provides additional information to various phenomena of popular culture, including advertising, by revealing the liberating power of popular-cultural texts and defeating the fear of death that is used by official institutions to expand their hegemony (Bauman, 2004; Lachmann, 19880-1989). By revealing the paradox embedded in advertising texts, a carnivalesque analysis leads to reexamining the definition of advertising.

This article opens with a discussion of the concept of advertising followed by an analysis of the Bakhtinian notion of carnival. The study continues with an analysis of various advertising text – the representative examples of carnivalesque imaginary, – such as on-line commercial for *JBS* underwear, print advertisements for *Glassing Sunglasses*, and *Scrabble*. The article's conclusion discusses the author's findings based on the analysis of the aforementioned text and proposes a revised definition of advertising.

THE CONCEPT OF ADVERTISING

There are a significant number of different definitions offered by practitioners and academicians (see Richards & Curran, 2002: 65-67). Richards and Curran (2002) conducted a survey via mail by sending questionnaires to “well-known agency executives, presidents of professional organizations, government regulators, and respected academics” (68) in order to develop a new definition of advertising. Although, the participants of the study did not reach a consensus, the authors derived the following definition,

Advertising is a paid, mediated form of communication from an identifiable source, designed to persuade the receiver to take some action, now or in the future (Richards & Curran, 2002: 74).

The authors add that, ‘mediated communication’ is “communication which is conveyed to an audience through print, electronics, or any method other than person-to-person contact” (Richards & Curran, 2002: 74). Nevertheless, the proposed definition of advertising raises a few problems. First, any form of communication is mediated. Secondly, if the notion of ‘action’ implies a process of doing something then the process of viewing is an action itself. Thirdly, the problem in the definition is related to the assumption that advertising message cannot be conveyed to an audience through person-to-person contact. This assumption is clearly conflicting with many recent examples of viral marketing, a “strategy that encourages individuals to pass on a marketing message to others, creating the potential for exponential growth in the message’s exposure” (Kirby, 2005: 88). From the aforementioned definition of viral marketing, it becomes obvious that advertising message can be conveyed through person-to-person contact. Fourthly, the problem emerges when defining advertising as a ‘paid form of communication’. Maynard and Scala (2006) have questioned this definition in their article Unpaid Advertising: A Case of Wilson the Volleyball in Cast Away. In the film *Cast Away*, the authors discuss the example of an advertisement for the Wilson organization that was featured in the movie even though the actual advertisement was not commissioned by the Wilson organization. Another marketing orientation that questions the definition of advertising proposed by Richards and Curran is unpaid consumer brand advocacy. Brand advocates spend more than average consumers on their favourite brands and influence others by recommending the product to their friends and family. Fifthly, the definition considered only the voices of ‘well-known agency executives, presidents of professional organizations, government regulators, and respected academics’ ignoring the voice of the ‘consumer’.

Karimova (2012: 5) suggests an alternative definition of advertising; Advertising is text, a framing of text, and

construction of the message by the ‘observer’ who ascribes to the message a meaning of promotion within the specific framing which is created by the ‘observer’ him/herself.

This definition resolves the problems embedded in Richards and Curran’s definition of advertising. It considers the blurred borderline between art, literature and advertising. Under the subjective analysis of a particular viewer, an advertisement becomes an artwork and an artwork turns into an advertisement. Verses written by Mayakovsky were turned into advertising slogans, and Kurt Schwitters, a German Dada artist and poet, has used advertising slogans in his poems. Any text is ‘unfinalizable’ and ‘polyphonic’ that is, it contains an infinite number of voices. The unique position that an ‘observer’ occupies in the time/space matrix enables one to identify different voices within the text. If an advertisement for Nike is framed and displayed in a museum then it is no longer just the advertisement for Nike. In such case, the voice of art prevails over other voices in a particular time and space. Such examples can be seen in works of Andy Warhol. The definition offered by Karimova (2012) also brings forward the significant role of not only the ‘agency’ and the ‘sponsor,’ but also the ‘consumer’ (the ‘viewer’, ‘reader’, etc.).

One can argue that the definition of advertising advanced by Karimova (2012) may seem to be applicable to any form of communication. However, what differentiates advertising from other forms of communication is a meaning of *promotion* that the ‘observer’ ascribes to text at a particular time and space. However, the concept of carnival challenges this statement by revealing the paradoxical nature of carnivalesque advertising. It shows that carnivalesque advertising does not only promote but also demote products/services.

THE CONCEPT OF CARNIVAL

Many authors have devoted their work to interpreting carnival and have constructed particular discourses of carnival. Events that take place at different times (Castle, 1986; Kolyazin, 2002) and in different countries (Supek, 1988; Mitchell, 1995; Lewis & Pile, 1996; Lindahl, 1996; Nurse, 1999; Tokofsky, 1999) are described by the same word, ‘carnival’. The matrix of ideas introduced by these different authors organizes the discourse of carnival.

There are two ways of looking at carnival: “carnival is both the name of a specific kind of historically instanced thing – the popular social institution of early modern Mardi Gras, for example – and an immaterial force which such particular instances characteristically embody” (Holquist, 1994: 89). In the following sections, the concept of carnival is analyzed from these two different angles.

Carnival as the 'Popular Social Institution'

The nature of carnival is rooted in pre-Christian pagan rites, particularly fertility ceremonies that were related to the coming of spring and rebirth of nature. Since early times carnivals were accompanied by parades, masquerades, pageants, and other forms of festivities. In Ancient Rome, the *Saturnalia* was one of the most popular holidays of the year dedicated to Saturn, the god of agriculture, and Ops, Saturn's wife, the goddess of plenty. During this holiday, restrictions were reduced, the social roles reversed, and gambling was allowed in public. "Slaves were permitted to use dice and did not have to work [...]. Slaves were treated as equals, allowed to wear their masters' clothing" (*Saturnalia*, n.d.). Later, the *Saturnalia* continued to be celebrated as the *Brumalia* (from *bruma*, winter solstice) "down to the Christian era, when, by the middle of the fourth century AD, its rituals had become absorbed in the celebration of Christmas" (*Saturnalia*, n.d.).

In Europe, during the Christian era carnival came before Lent.

Carnival long ago was conceived as the last chance for forty days to eat meat, to make love to your wife (and/or others), and to live joyously, all forbidden activities during the season when one is supposed to do penance in preparation of spiritual resurrection at Easter (Crowley, 1999: 224).

Because carnivals are deeply rooted in pagan superstitions and the folklore of Europe, the Roman Catholic Church was unable to forbid them and finally accepted many of them as part of church activity, eliminating however the most offending elements (Carnival, 2004). Nearly every church feast had some traditions, belonging to folk celebrations, for example, "parish feasts, usually marked by fairs and varied open air amusements, with the participation of giants, dwarfs, monsters, and trained animals" (Bakhtin, 1984: 5).

An event similar to carnival has been celebrated in the Persian Empire around 400 B.C. and was known as the *Fire Feast* or *Sadeh* (سده). The *Fire Feast* was celebrated on the first night of winter. During the feast, people would light bonfires through which they would jump and change their appearance by wearing masks and clothes, which would hide their identities. These celebrations would happen in open spaces and people from many different backgrounds would participate in the event regardless of their status, age and gender in society (Marizhan Mule, Hertzfeld & Grischman, 1993: 1463). This ancient tradition continues in Iran today, for example, in the form of the *Festival of Fire*, which is celebrated night before the last Wednesday of the year, usually in March. *Festival of Fire* (شنبه‌رچه‌ها یرسو), [Chahar Shanbeh Soori] literary means 'Red Wednesday.' People jump over the fire, "wear strange dresses and

sometimes wrap themselves up in sheets to symbolize the shrouds of the dead" (Arab, 2007). However, nowadays some of the rituals and traditions have been changed under the influence of Islamic religion.

Traditions of carnival have acquired new meanings over time, but certain features of carnival have remained the same in many countries. Parading, masquerading, songs, folk dancing, and the suspension of social hierarchy can be named as a few of these features.

'Carnival' as an 'Immaterial Force'

Mikhail Bakhtin (1895 - 1975) perceives carnival as very versatile phenomenon with implications of the ambiguity of life, the "double aspect of the world," and the blurred borderline between actors and spectators. Bakhtin views carnival as "a myth of ambivalence that denies the "end" by sublimating death in and through laughter" (Lachmann, 1988-1989: 124), and as "a means for displaying otherness" (emphasis in original, Holquist, 1994: 89). According to Lachmann (1988-1989), carnival laughter "reconciles the primordial opposition between life and death" (p. 130), utopia can be found only in the ambivalent carnival laughter. Some distinguishing characteristics of discourse of carnival constructed by Bakhtin are laughter for the sake of laughter, mocking the present official political system, religious dogmas and authoritative figures, grotesque realism, billingsgate language, degradation of high images, celebration of lower bodily stratum (Bakhtin, 1984), and masquerade. Within the discourse constructed by Bakhtin, carnival challenges the social and political systems of the world and suspends hierarchal relations. Bakhtin highlights characteristics of medieval carnival such as universal participation, bringing opposites together, festive ambivalent laughter, grotesque realism, and crowning and decrowning of the king (Bakhtin, 1984).

For Bakhtin, the carnivals celebrated in the marketplaces of France and Russia during the Middle Ages and Renaissance are some of the instances of 'carnival,' of a theoretical concept with a deep philosophical meaning. It is not only a physical space and period of time where all people are involved in certain activities; it is a world where people can be what they want to be, can do what they cannot do in the 'real' world, and can release their desires that in the 'real' world are suppressed by social norms, official culture, and ideological systems. For example, Bakhtin finds the works created by Rabelais, Baccaccio, the tradition of Menippean satire, and other literary works deeply influenced by the traditions of medieval carnival, which carried the spirit of folk culture. Carnavalesque principles became the basis of not only carnivalized literature but also other artistic genres (such as films, paintings, and cartoons). As mentioned above, this transition through time and space from carnival cultural praxis to popular

culture text (including advertising) represents 'creative memory'.

The connection between Bakhtinian carnival and modern popular-cultural texts such as TV shows, films, and animated series is obvious drawn by other researchers, but the connection between Bakhtinian carnival and modern advertising might be less obvious. The connection between advertising and popular culture can be traced to Medieval and Renaissance carnivals, which were usually celebrated in the market place. Carnavalesque advertising was a part of carnival culture. This idea has been expressed by Bakhtin in his correspondence with Vladimir Turbin (1962-1966), Turbin, letter 13, Sometimes some trifle occurs to my mind: for example, the aesthetic of advertising, poster and its connection with the aesthetics of "serious" genres. I came up with some nonsense, when, let's say, on TV screen the monolog of Hamlet suddenly is interrupted by the intrusion of smooth and fatten gentleman and this jollier starts persuading that Hamlet was suffering because he did not wear suspenders by Company A, and Ophelia went crazy because she did not use the tooth paste by Company B – then it is ... a regularity, tradition – perverted – but tradition. It is the tradition of middle age clowns and buffoons (Turbin, ed. Pankova, 2005, Karimova G.Z., Trans.).

Bakhtin, letter 14

I liked your thoughts about Hamlet and advertising, modernism, carnivalesque nature of art very much, and in many aspects, they coincide with mine. In my "Rabelais," there is an entire section dedicated to marketplace commercial advertising of middle ages and Renaissance (so-called "announcements of Paris"). This ambivalent advertising, besides other marketplace elements, organically harmonizes with the art of Renaissance. Folk-carnavalesque model of the world for thousands of years was defining all the creative forms of culture and thinking (Bakhtin, ed. Pankova, 2005, Karimova G.Z., Trans.). Folk-carnavalesque model of the world was and still is defining the creative forms of culture. Modern advertising retains traces of carnival culture.

Bakhtin (1984: 167) describes carnivalesque advertising as a combination of praise and abuse; it is ironic and ambivalent; it does not "teach, accuse, or intimidate;" it is "absolutely gay and fearless talk, free and frank." For Bakhtin (1984), advertisements for carnival are always filled with laughter, irony, ambiguity, praise and abuse. In his book *Rabelais and His World*, he writes, Rabelais recreates that special marketplace atmosphere in which the exalted and the lowly, the sacred and the profane are leveled and are all drawn into the same dance. Such have always been the announcements at the fair. They did not demand conventional forms or official speeches. They enjoyed the privileges of the people's laughter. Popular advertising is

always ironic, always makes fun of itself at a certain extent (Bakhtin, 1984: 160).

Carnavalesque advertising is always ambiguous. It is praising and abusing; promoting and demoting.

The Bakhtinian concept of carnival has already been applied to various phenomena of popular culture: Janack (2006) explores the rhetoric of Jesse Ventura's political campaign within the theoretical frame of the Bakhtinian theory of carnival; Brown (1998) analyzes the theatrical dance show *River Dance* and the print advertisements for *Moët & Chandon* from the perspective of Bakhtinian concepts of carnival, chronotopes and polyphony; Holland-Toll (1999) also uses the Bakhtinian theory of carnival to discuss how Stephen King's horror fiction *The Shining* works. However, some important aspects of carnivalesque analysis, especially regarding advertising, seem to be overlooked by previous research. For example, examining an advertisement for *Moët & Chandon* champagne, Stephen Brown (1998) finds its carnivalesque nature 'readily apparent.' The most vivid illustration of the carnival in this advertisement, according to the writer, is the product itself, which is related to "celebration, revelry, special occasions, emotion, euphoria, laughter, tears, transgression, bacchanalian excess" (p. 141). For Brown (1998), carnival "may be characterized by eroticism and titillation, by ribaldry and irreverence" (ibid). The author describes the central figure of the advertisement as having "heavy-lidded, half-closed, amatorial eyes, sideway glance, sensual mouth, seductive posture (draped over a chair, leaning toward us)" (ibid). However, the depiction of a 'sensual mouth' and 'amatorial eyes' does not make the advertisement carnivalesque. Brown (1998) puts forward features, which can be considered a part of carnivalesque imagery but is unable to find the principles of carnival such as grotesque realism, the principle of degradation and regeneration, 'gay relativity', and emphasis on the genital organs, as these are the most significant principles which define carnival.

The carnivalesque analysis sets forth an alternative interpretation of advertising as a popular culture phenomenon by revealing its carnivalesque features and displaying how 'creative memory' is enacted in advertising texts such as, the on-line commercial for *JBS* men's underwear, a series of print advertisements for *Glassing Sunglasses*, and advertising campaign *The Beautiful World for Mattel-Scrabble*.

CARNAVALESQUE ANALYSIS OF ADVERTISING

Carnavalesque Analysis of the On-line Commercial for the *JBS* Men's Underwear

A half-open door of a toilet accompanied by the sound of

urinating is the opening scene of the *JBS* on-line commercial. Urinating is a feature of a grotesque carnivalesque image and one of the lower bodily stratum. Urine within the carnivalesque system of imaging is the link to life and death (Bakhtin, 1984: 180), and it unites body and sea (p. 335). The image of urine is ambivalent as it helps to “debase, destroy, regenerate, and renew simultaneously” (Bakhtin, 1984: 151). Its degrading significance is apparent (it is also reflected in various verbal expressions such as ‘piss off’ or ‘take the piss out of somebody’). The regenerative significance of this commercial is defined by the relation of the lower part of the body not only to “a bodily grave but also the area of the genital organs, the fertilizing and generating stratum. Therefore, in the images of urine and excrement is preserved the essential link with birth, fertility, renewal, welfare” (Bakhtin, 1984: 148).

In the following scenes, a woman spits, belches, and scratches her backside. These scenes refer to the bodily functions and bodily life and represent the grotesque realism described by Bakhtin. The dirty and disorganized apartment combined with a sense of carelessness about one’s health is shown as the woman eats a bowl of cereal accompanied by beer. These disorderly features are stereotypically attributed to men. Ambiguity is also embodied by the naked woman wearing men’s underwear, which combines male and female traits.

The last scene depicts the woman sitting in front of a TV, watching car racing, farting and enjoying the smell, which is a typical grotesque gesture as it relates to the genital organs, the anus and buttocks, the belly and the bowels. This gesture creates a sense of laughter among the viewers as the contrast of the beautiful woman acting grotesquely creates a carnivalesque image. The peculiarity of modern advertising is that it brings together the ‘grotesque body’ and ‘the classical body’ – two aesthetic principles between which Bakhtin draws a distinction (Dentith, 1995: 67).

The commercial continues with the slogan, “Men don’t want to look at naked men.” Men like to watch an attractive naked woman even if the advertised product is not designed for men. However, the advertisement can be interpreted from a different perspective: *JBS* underwear creates masculinity and changes the image of a feminine young woman into the image of a masculine man. This replacement of images is a carnivalesque characteristic.

Carnavalesque Analysis of Print Advertisements for Glassing Sunglasses

The series of advertisements, which appeared on-line as well as in print in 2009, depicts men or women wearing sunglasses, but the form of an advertising character has been transformed in such way that the face is presented

in the shape of buttocks. The grotesque is recognizable as the human form is transforming to the ‘other.’ There are still traces of a human form, but in this metamorphosis, the moment of change from human to non-human is vivid. In a wider social context, it represents the birth of a new human form that is free from previously constructed social norms. Although, the image undermines the social constructs, it sustains the capitalist ideology of production and consumption as does the grotesque image reflects its essential trait, ambivalence. This ambivalence generates laughter; a laughter where viewers are not mocking what is being viewed, but rather this laughter is carnivalesque in nature, it is not an individual reaction to some isolated “comic” event. Carnival laughter is the laughter of all people. [...] it is universal in scope; it is directed at all and everyone, including the carnival’s participants (11).

In this advertisement, the top and bottom exchange places in a literal sense. In these reversals, one can trace the motif of ambivalent carnivalesque laughter.



Figure 1. Print advertisement for Glassing Sunglasses

Carnavalesque Analysis of Print Advertisements for Mattel-Scrabble

In 2008, *Ogilvy Paris* commissioned six artists from different countries to create posters for *Mattel-Scrabble*, one of the largest toy companies. Scrabble is a popular ‘word’ board game, but as one of the members of the creative team in *Ogilvy Paris* advertising agency says, “a little bit old fashioned” (Danis, 2009), so the posters try to bring back excitement and interest to the game by connecting “seemingly random sketches [...] as though the words themselves spawned from the game, rooted and gave birth to their own interconnected yet disassociated



Figure 2. Print advertisement for Mattel-Scrabble

story threads" (Danis, 2009). *Scrabble's The Beautiful Word* campaign utilizes the voices of various storytellers from around the globe. The advertisements reveal their polyphonic nature through the quotes from many artistic contributors.

The Figure 2 advertisement follows the same rules as the game of scrabble. If one views it as a sequence of graphics that are connected, it becomes apparent that the logic of the advertising creators is the same as the logic of the game. In other words, in the posters, each figure is somehow connected to other figures; each figure is created from the figure produced 'before' and gives birth to a figure produced 'afterward.' In the same way, in the scrabble game, each word is generated from the word created 'before' and gives birth to the word created 'afterward.' This sequencing of the images within the advertisement is done in a grotesque manner. The themes that the images follow are of those of death, birth, eating, copulation, drinking, mutilation, etc. As a whole, they organize a continuous form, which implies all the characteristics mentioned above comprise a single entity. For example, a piece of steak which has hands and which might be eaten transforms into a human with a cigarette in his mouth. A frog that is trying to catch a crow by its tongue sits on top of the cigarette. The cigarette and the frog create a singularity, which can be viewed as the image of a worm. In the succession mentioned above both concepts of life and death are represented in a singular sequence. The image of death is reinforced by the appearance of the worm from the meat that is also an image of life as the meat is dead the worm is alive. This sequence creates the ambivalent grotesque system, which is described by Bakhtin (1984) as "pregnant death"

(25). For Bakhtin (1984), 'the old pregnant' woman in the Kerch terracotta collection of figurines is a symbol of an ambivalent grotesque image, "It is ambivalent. It is pregnant death, a death that gives birth" (25). The image of an old pregnant woman alludes to the interactive relationships between contradictory dimensions: death and life.

The advertisement is a continuous narrative of the same themes. There are references to bodily fluids, mutilated bodies, skeletons, masks, reversal of roles, gapping mouths, the protruding tongue, genital organs, exaggerated proportion, etc. One may conclude that advertising could represent the social structure and individual within that structure. The interconnectivity that creates the whole of the society is represented by the advertising as each individual is utilized by and utilizing in a way or a form another individual. These relations continue in a non-linear chain as it is in a series of advertisements. One may say that the distinguishing characteristic of these advertisements is the lack of morality. If we accept that the advertisement is representing the social relations among the individuals in a capitalistic system then we may conclude that the capitalistic society is based upon immoral principles they lack any spirituality (if such a thing exists). Such a society only pays attention to the base characteristics of human nature and fulfilling basic needs. Therefore, one may argue that these series of advertisements, by representing capitalistic system as immoral, undermine the capitalist system. Thus, one may observe contradictory aspects of advertising: on the one hand, it promotes the capitalist order and the ideology of production and consumption, and, on the other hand, it

dispels cosmic fears through laughter, and depicts “a people who are continually growing and renewed” (Bakhtin, 1984: 19). One may see the depicted images, from the one perspective, as the base immoral individual bodies and from the other side, as the fertile growing regenerating bodies. This ambiguity generates carnivalesque laughter. It also reveals the paradoxical nature of advertising, showing that carnivalesque advertising may not only promote products/services, but also play them down.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated how carnival culture is at work in the text of modern advertising such as the on-line commercial for *JBS Men's* underwear, a series of printed advertisements for *Glassing Sunglasses*, and *Mattel-Scrabble's* the *Beautiful Word* advertising campaign. This transition from carnival cultural praxis to popular culture text through time and space represents ‘creative memory.’ Many phenomena of modern popular culture, including advertising, are situated within the paradigm of carnival, which can be characterized by grotesque realism, billingsgate language, degradation of high images, celebration of lower bodily stratum, masquerading, crowning and decrowning, festive ambivalent laughter, dispelling of cosmic fear, suspension of hierarchal structures and bringing oppositions together.

The significance of the carnivalized text of popular culture is that it offers an alternative way of looking at the excepted order of life and establishes a dialogue between various, often contradictory, voices. Although the carnivalized text may not change political and social situations, it enables people to understand the official ideology and to defeat the fear of death that is used by official institutions to expand their hegemony (Bauman, 2004; Lachmann 19880-1989).

It may seem that between advertising and carnival no connection can be detected. Advertising, contrary to carnival, in many cases, creates fears: of oldness, death, illness, loneliness, etc., and at the same time offers a product or service as the solution. However, this kind of advertisement can be interpreted as the process of ‘crowning’ and ‘decrowning’ of the fear – a particular aspect of carnivalesque culture. For example, the advertisements for anti-aging creams promise to make the consumer look younger by reducing visible wrinkles. The rhetoric of these advertisements presents wrinkles as a threat to ‘youth’ and creates fear of aging, but at the same time it offers a solution, a product, which will help the consumer to remain young and beautiful. The image of carnivalesque advertising “combining praise and abuse seeks to grasp the very moment of [the] change, the transfer from the old to the new, from death to life. Such an image crowns and uncrowns at the same time”

(Bakhtin, 1984: 166). Contemporary advertising simultaneously creates and obliterates the fear, revealing its ambiguity, so common to carnivalesque announcements of the medieval fair.

Carnival can be viewed, as Holquist (1994: 89) puts it, as a means for demonstrating that the conventional social and political laws are not ‘given’ (*дан, дан*) but ‘created’ (*zadan, задан, or sozdan, создан*). One may argue that advertising does not show that the existing social and political orders are ‘created,’ not ‘given’; on the contrary, advertising reproduces social hierarchy and existing political system. Yet, there are more and more advertising campaigns that ‘push against stereotypes’ (such as *Nike* and *Dove's* Real Beauty campaigns) and raise awareness of social issues. Undoubtedly, one may say that the use of the environmental and social issues can serve the interests of companies who, by evoking the rebellious spirit in their customers, pursue their only goal, to sell more goods and make more profit. Some researchers (Langman, 2008; Orend & Gagné, 2009; Rifkin, 2000) draw similar conclusion from their studies: the expressions of resistance to the ‘mainstream’ culture and existing socio-economic structure (Goth, punk, ‘porn chic’ as a lifestyle) can become a profitable realm for late capitalism. However, the very co-existence of these contradictory aspects within advertising is what brings advertising and carnival together. Ambiguity, a fusion of opposite poles and a combination of various voices are the exact qualities of the grotesque body, which is one of the main characteristics of carnival culture. Advertising, as any other phenomenon of popular culture, is a grotesque body where the aforementioned contradictory aspects interact with each other, evoking ambivalent laughter.

This paradoxical nature of advertising has direct implication on how one views and defines advertising. Carnivalesque advertising does not only promote products/services, but plays them down. Ramification of this statement is reflected in the following revised definition of advertising.

Advertising is text, a framing of text, and construction of the message by the ‘observer’ who ascribes to the message a meaning of promotion and/or demotion within the specific framing which is created by the ‘observer’ him/herself.

Thus, this study has integrated aspects of carnival to advertising theory by developing a revised definition of advertising. A carnivalesque perspective may serve to rethink the conception of advertising and shed new light on the nature of advertising.

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There is no agreement on the exact meaning of the word Sadeh (Farsi "سده").

² "Menippean satire as a genre is characterized by its mockery of serious forms, its digression and exaggeration, and its mixture of prose and verse (lofty quoted verse "novelized" by the less reverent prose surrounding it)" (Emerson, 2003: 316). Some of the most famous works of Menippean satire belong to Marcus Terentius Varro (116 BC-27 BC). Another examples are *Apocolocyntosis* or *Pumpkinification* written by Seneca the Younger (4BC-65AD), *Satyricon* (late 1st century CE) written by Gaius Petronius (27AD-66AD), and *Golden Ass* or *Metamorphoses* (late 2nd century AD) written by Apuleius (123AD-180AD).

³The correspondence between Turbin, V.N. and Bakhtin, M.M. with the comments have been edited by Pankov, N.A. and published in the Russian journal *Znamja* (Знамя). Below I cite the letters in the form they appeared in the journal *Znamja*. Those extracts that have been used in my article are italicized.

April 19, 1963

Dear Mikhail!

Continue to write, invent something. Sometimes come to mind some little things: for example, the aesthetics of advertising, poster and its relationship with the aesthetics of the "serious" genres. Thought of nonsense: when, say, the TV screen suddenly interrupted by Hamlet's soliloquy invasion smooth fatted this jolly gentleman and begins to assert that Hamlet was suffering because he was not wearing suspenders company A. and Ophelia went mad because he did not use a tooth pasta company B., - it ... law tradition - perverted, but the tradition. Tradition of ancient and medieval jesters, buffooner. And no matter how the tradition in this case is perverted - it still is closer to Shakespeare's "Hamlet";

and the next hamlet, which was locked in this box theater and made meticulously talk about "the need to fight" - it's Shakespeare in sofronovski. Sometimes things mereschatsya and serious- about modernism as early modeling the human race some universal holiday, as the manifestation of trends in art back to the street, to the area . Picasso, Léger, Kandinsky ridiculous when they hang on the same wall where hung Prianishnikov, Shishkin and Ge; but Picasso and Kandinsky - this painting some models unprecedentedly beautiful cities, towns socialist in a sophisticated and complicated sense of the word, urban, human - trafficking brothers, people in a good mood: to admire the huge planes Jeweled harmoniously coexisting color spots and lines can be only when people - good mood when they have fun when they understand each other . And here - to the conclusion that art - it schematically, the purpose of production; goal, which appears as if the artist had already been achieved. That is why it is and festive, carnival by nature - for a holiday carnival is, in essence, the goal of everyday life, the goal of everyday life. Conclusion is strictly Marxist; but goes and proves that he is a Marxist! And besides - one small complication: when planted in the art of dream holiday faced with a particular program, there is a conflict between them - the program cannot meet the "hidden" in the structure of the artwork requirements and ... announces their idle indulgence, empty undertaking. So it was, for example, in the 60s: it is necessary "to ax call Russia", and here there is something about Pushkin Mozart spread, some carnivals started there. So, go-ka you, brother Pushkin, to hell! This is how...

May 10 , 1963

Dear Vladimir!

Only now going to reply to your lovely letter from 19/IV with. Was all the fault of my not too carnival mood lately. Your thoughts about Hamlet and advertising, modernism, about the nature of art carnival I loved, and they are largely the same as mine. In my "Rabelais" is a whole section devoted to commercial advertising marketplace of the Middle Ages and Renaissance (so-called "cries of Paris"). This ambivalent advertising, along with other polygonal elements organically consonant with Renaissance art and perfectly combined with it. People's carnival world model it defines all forms of creative - SCIE culture and thought. Only the 19th century almost completely rejected it, won *bestia seriosa* (ie "Shakespeare in sofronovski"). I said "almost" because the seriousness of the net devoid of all creative potential. Even a simple comparison or metaphor suggests at least some humor liberties. In an atmosphere of absolute seriousness (in the limit) can be no movement of thought (any thought, not just art). Absolute seriousness commands stand without movement ("Freeze!").

⁴See <http://www.visit4info.com/details.cfm?adid=40058>

⁵See <http://www.jawbone.tv/featured/2-featured/26-scrabbles-the-beautiful-word-campaign-true-collaborative-undertaking-.html?start=1>

⁶Later, the print advertisements have been transformed to television spots that have been aired in 2009 on French television stations, such as Paris Première.