

A Bakhtinian Study of Art and Sentiments in Hoover's *Maybe Someday* and *Confess*

* Anam Tariq, Lecturer (Corresponding Author)

** Ayesha Abid, Student

Abstract



The research identified the impact of artistic elements on relationships, expressions and narrative structure. The study examined the sentiments and their progress. In this paper, qualitative method is applied with a combination of analytical and interpretive approach. The research is gauged through the theoretical framework of Bakhtinian Theory by Russian critic Mikhail Bakhtin. The two novels studied are *Maybe Someday* and *Confess* by Colleen Hoover. The sentiments in the novels are presented in an ingenious manner and exemplify impeccable use of dialogism and carnivalesque. Colleen Hoover demonstrated what Bakhtin had theorized. The paper deduced that the integration of art has heavy influence on narrative structure, and that art has coping, redemptive, transformative, and therapeutic effects. In the paper, it was also found that through powerful dialogues, and a well-structured narrative, sentiments can be portrayed more powerfully, and their impact is left at a wider audience. The paper further showed that art is a complete expression in itself, and where words cannot deliver, art does.

Keywords: Art, Bakhtin, Carnavalesque, Dialogism, Sentiments.

Introduction

The massive, and perpetually evolving terrain of contemporary literature and its integration with innumerable forms of art has given birth to variegated narratives that demand exploration. The union of art and literature is timeless. The intersection always generates a dynamic interplay, enriching reader's experience and contributing to well-developed character arcs, deeper emotions, and nuanced narratives. Literature of today demonstrates the rapid budding of a rather sensitive society where every word is scrutinized upon, every dialogue is dissected and every work undergoes a critical check. However, this does not restrict modern writers from exploring sensitive themes. This paper firstly, scrutinizes the effect of artistic intervention, and investigates the complexities of modern-age storytelling. Secondly, it examines the outbursts and turmoil of emotions and the manner in which they are delivered to the audience. Thirdly, it analyzes how the amalgamation of music and visual arts behave and affects the plotline. Lastly, it studies Hoover's writing style, and the use of Bakhtinian theory in her novels.

Since her debut in 2012, Colleen Hoover has established her voice in the world of fiction in a short span. With the production of emotionally charged narratives, and sensitive themes, she has garnered an audience that is devoted to her works and resonates to characters generated by her. The most acclaimed trait of Hoover's writing is her ability to weave sentimental complexities in an effortlessly consumable manner. Currently, she is commercially acclaimed, and largely valued by the critics; this is due to the rawness of her dialogues, rich narratives and multifaceted characters. In spite of her fame, academic research has evaluated limited works of Hoover and are often overlooked. *Maybe Someday* and *Confess* are widely celebrated novels. Where *Maybe Someday* has a beautifully written sequel, *Confess* has been made into a web series. Both these novels are infused with artistically rich plotline and carefully crafted dialogues.

Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts are crucial yet very simple. It is quoted that: "Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction." (Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*). Bakhtin throughout his work believed in the power of interaction -when two people engage in a dialogue, speak to one another in time and space, based on certain intentions. He quotes:

The word... becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive

* Department of English, LCWU, Lahore Email: anamtariq24@gmail.com

* MS English Literature, LCWU, Lahore Email: ayeshabed18@gmail.com

intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is not, after all, out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!), but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions. (Bakhtin p. 293, *The Dialogic Imagination*)

Bakhtin believes that a word on its own has no meaning; it is the context and intention that give it meaning. In short, dialogism is simply a conversation where more than one voice and more than one person is involved. The interplay of these voices creates a rhythm, or a conversation, from which meaning can be derived, emotions can be formed, and story can move forward.

One of the most famous concepts of Bakhtin is Carnavalesque. It is a subversion of the social hierarchies and a satire on the stereotypical ideas. Concept of carnivalesque can be seen in Hoover's novels when the character rebel for a short period of time, knowing that they will have to get back to life. All seems fair during a carnival, and Hoover's characters are seen hanging around in spaces, forgetting about the moral dilemmas because in Bakhtin's words:

Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people. While carnival lasts, there is no other life outside it. During carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom. It has a universal spirit; it is a special condition of the entire world, of the world's revival and renewal, in which all take part. Such is the essence of carnival, vividly felt by all its participants. (p.7-8, *Rabelais and His World*)

Furthermore, Bakhtin has laid strong perspectives on art. He believes that art is not merely a medium of expression but a space where perspectives can unite, intersect and explore. He believes that art and life are inseparable; art does not exist within us, but it must be united with us. He quotes:

Art is too self-confident, audaciously self-confident, and too high-flown. When a human being is in art, he is not in life, and conversely. There is no unity between them and no inner interpenetration within the unity of an individual person. Art and life are not one, but they must become united in myself-in the unity of my answerability. (Bakhtin p.2, *Art and Answerability*) Bakhtin stresses on the importance of art for beings to express themselves, and to free themselves; he describes art to be a medium of expression and freedom. This aligns directly to

Hoover's presentation -the way her novels use forms of art as a mode of expression and freedom. Just like art, it can also be believed that Hoover is indeed a believer of using dialogues to showcase the development of the story instead of long monologues and she uses carnivalesque for her characters to temporarily escape the reality and shackles of life.

Research Significance

The significance of this research is to capture how Hoover impeccably incorporates visual art and music in her novels *Maybe Someday* and *Confess*. The study generates a tapestry to examine character dynamics, effects and the progression of plot through the Bakhtinian lens of dialogism, carnivalesque and the notion of art. The study bridges the gap between contemporary literature and its examination through Bakhtin's point of view. Furthermore, the research scrutinizes the effect of artistic intervention, and investigates the complexities of modern-age storytelling. This research seeks a fresh interpretive approach to study art, literature and its implications with regards to modern-day literature. To a layman, this research instills a perspective to view artistic dialogues carefully, and understand how simple things such as music and painting can leave a lasting impact. The research also exemplifies Bakhtin's theory that may otherwise be difficult for a common person to understand; it lets the reader grasp the depth of the theory, how it blends with common dialogues, and how humble things in life are filled with profound meanings.

Aim of the Study

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the impact of the intervention of artistic elements, depth of dialogues, and the sentimental expressions on narrative.

Research Objectives

This study is anchored by a set of objectives. The objectives are to:

1. Investigate artistic dialogues to understand their influence on individuals and narratives
2. Examine the depiction of sentiments, character dynamics and interactions through Bakhtinian concepts to deduce their impact and relevance.

Research Questions:

The questions below are crafted carefully to conduct a comprehensive study. The questions are:

1. How do the characters reflect emotions through the use of dialogues?
2. How does the inclusion of artistic expressions influence the plot and character dynamics?
3. How does Bakhtinian theory contribute to the understanding of the narrative?
4. How does Bakhtinian concepts help in comprehending the depicted emotions and interactions?

Literature Review

Mikhail Bakhtin has contributed diversely for the field of literature, primarily through his concept of dialogism, art, and carnivalesque. His ideas have generated a dynamic theoretical framework that can be used to understand, critique and study language, narrative and culture.

This research is based on a comprehensive understanding of Bakhtinian concepts of dialogism, carnivalesque and art. The research focuses on *Maybe Someday* and *Confess* as the text of choice. This research aims to find the impact of art on the narrative and how Hoover exemplifies Bakhtinian concepts in her works. The review aims to investigate the current scholarly discourse on Hoover's novels in question, along with Bakhtinian concepts.

The concept of dialogism is Bakhtin's most significant concept. It suggests that the meaning and purpose of all languages is initially dialogic, and it emerges from multiples narratives and perspectives intersecting. Bakhtin says that "the word in language is half someone else's" (p.291, *The Dialogic Imagination*) and is shaped by the interplay of different perspectives. Bakhtin explains that an artistic work is dynamic, and the dialogue is constant. Bakhtin opposes to the idea of a single objective reality and believes in different interpretations based on different factors. He believes in multiple, independent voices, and many, many dialects that make up voices within a narrative. He believes that everyone creates their own reality, and that the reality is rather subjective and open to suggestions.

An artistic work is not a closed, self-contained entity but rather a dynamic event that involves a continual dialogue between the author, the work itself, and the audience. Bakhtin contends that the author is not the sole authority over the meaning of a work; instead, meaning emerges through a complex interplay of voices, perspectives, and responses. This perspective challenges the notion of a single, definitive interpretation and highlights the richness of polyphony and heteroglossia in artistic discourse. (p.261, *The Dialogic Imagination*)

Dissanayake, author of *Art and Intimacy* investigates the profound connection between art and the expression of human emotional identity. The role of art is a reliable medium that enhances and deepens the experience of love, enabling it to attain a heightened level of intimacy. Dissanayake's examination of this intrinsic interplay between art and intimacy contributes valuable insights to the understanding of how artistic expression fosters emotional connections and enriches human relationships. (Dissanayake)

Bakhtin believes that art is answerable. He believes that when an art piece is created, it becomes accountable for its being. The creator of that art piece is and must be held accountable for there is no union between the artist and the art, but they must come together in order to survive. Bakhtin says:

Art is too self-confident, audaciously self-confident, and too high-flown. when a human being is in art, he is not in life, and conversely. There is no unity between them and no inner interpenetration within the unity of an individual person. Art and life are not one, but they must become united in myself-in the unity of my answerability. (p.2, *Art and Answerability*)

The concept of carnivalesque has been applied on several literary texts; it challenges the authority and social norms. The idea is to subvert all orthodox notions and create your own safe space 'carnival'. The operation of carnivalesque is seen extensively in Shakespeare's work especially in comedies where a brief interruption of traditional social hierarchies is challenged and alternative arrangements occur. Shakespeare's texts include a wide variety of elements that cross counter the social stereotypes and disrupts the social structure for a small period of time. (Stallybrass and White , p.28-30).

In current days, identity and experience, Bakhtinian concepts like dialogism and heteroglossia have been used extensively. Specifically, dialogism stresses how various voices interact within a text to allow for a variety of perspectives that defy a single, canonical interpretation. By combining a range of language varieties, dialects, and sociolects into the story, heteroglossia adds even more diversity to this plurality and weaves an intricate web of interpretations that speaks to the

fragmented and diversified character of the postmodern world. For instance, Robert Stam addresses in Bakhtin and Postmodern Culture how postmodern writers challenge conventional narrative forms and develop new ways of depicting consciousness through dialogism and heteroglossia (Stam, p.67). According to Stam, Bakhtinian analysis offers an insightful framework for comprehending the constantly changing and multidimensional character of human experience in a postmodern setting, where meaning is continuously negotiated and reinterpreted in postmodern literature. With the help of these ideas, postmodern literature takes on the form of an ongoing dialogue where the lines between writer, reader, and text are muddled, facilitating a dialogic process of meaning-making that reflects the complexity of modern life.

Bakhtin argues that the voice of a character is equally if not more powerful as that of the author. He says:

A character's word about himself and his world is just as fully weighted as the author's word usually is; it is not subordinated to the character's objectified image as merely one of his characteristics, nor does it serve as a mouthpiece for the author's voice. It possesses extraordinary independence in the structure of the work; it sounds, as it were, alongside the author's words and in a special way combines both with it and with the full and equally valid voices of other characters. (p.7, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics)

The evaluation of Bakhtinian lenses has been applicable to different form of arts including the digital media as well, it helps to explore the multi-aptitudes of narratives and analysis of visual devices. Taking the example of Heteroglossia and Visual Narrative, Nicholas Mirzoeff, explains the working applications of heteroglossia phenomenon in visual media, like Film and Television, where the viewers witness the interactive reaction of amalgamation of multiple visual and narrative techniques that gives a very multiplex dynamics to the narrative structure of art. Mirzoeff defends Bakhtinian evaluation by stating it an integral and crucial part for comprehending the contradiction of visual media where meaning is always variable to personal interpretations and preferences. (Mirzoeff p.78)

Colleen Hoover's novels have seen limited academic research. A study was conducted on Hoover's *Regretting US*, using 'Kenney's theory of conflict classification, Harlina's theory of parental overprotectiveness, and Syamsu's theory of the effect of parental overprotectiveness on their children.' The study examines the effects of negative parenting, and discovers internal and external conflicts. The research deduces that the overprotectiveness of the mother resulted in psychologically challenged and troubled children. (Putra, et al.)

Another study was conducted on Hoover's novel *Ugly Love*. The purpose of the study was to understand and analyze the figurative language of the novel. The results of the novel are as follow:

The result of this study found 6 types of figurative language in this novel. That are 33 data of personifications (33 data), 19 data of similes, 11 data of irony, 10 data of hyperbole, 9 data of metaphors, and 5 data of metonymy. The most of dominant type of figurative language in the *Ugly Love* by Colleen Hoover is personification. (Tiarawati)

The above given literature analyzes a selected set of articles, books, and studies to review the Bakhtinian theories and concepts. The provided review also includes articles and studies that use Bakhtinian concepts applied on other works. Furthermore, the review features a book that connects art with emotions. Lastly, the review ends with works of Colleen Hoover that has been analyzed through literary lens.

After reviewing the previously existing literature, it is evident that a sea of work has been conducted on Bakhtinian concepts, however, Hoover's novels have been studied under limited research. Furthermore, contemporary novels have not been studied under Bakhtin's lens. The lack of contemporary novels studied under Bakhtin's lens is a gap in literature, as well as the limited research that is done on Colleen Hoover also serves as one. Lastly, there is limited scholarly research on the impact of art on fiction, and on the inclusion of art in literary narratives. All these factors are missing in academic research. Hence, the current paper aims to fill the gap, and give room to further and broader research.

Research Methodology

The research employs qualitative method to evaluate the impact of inclusion of art on character dynamics, and overall narrative structure. The study is critical and evaluative in nature. A combined analytical and interpretive approach is taken to objectively and subjectively conduct an in-depth

textual analysis. The minute details woven into the narrative structure are closely studied and to effectively gauge the texts, theoretical framework of Mikhail Bakhtin is opted for.

The novels are analyzed through his lens of dialogism, polyphony, carnivalesque, and his concept of art.

The research uses *Maybe Someday* and *Confess* as primary texts. To support the research multiple secondary texts are taken in account. These include Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, *Art and Answerability*, *The Dialogic Imagination*, and *Towards a Philosophy of the Act*. Ellen Dissanayake's *Art and Intimacy*, and Hoover's *Maybe Now* are also used along with some published articles. The material utilized as secondary source is carefully selected to ensure its relevance to the research, and the primary sources.

Analysis

Mikhail Bakhtin posits that dialogism exceeds the mere concept of dialogues. He believes that the word is alien on its own, and shapes itself only following its interaction with another word (Patterson p.132). In writing, Colleen Hoover's most powerful tool is her ability to form effective dialogues that reflect authentic, real-life conversations. Through her dialogical interactions, Colleen Hoover lets the reader be aware of the characters' vulnerabilities and emotions.

Art, according to Bakhtin is dialogic in nature. He believes that once the art takes a physical form, it is no longer solitary, and becomes a dialogue, bearing emotional conditions and ethical accountability (p.2, *Art and Answerability*). Colleen Hoover knits her storyline with art. Art provides a vessel to cope with one's inner conflicts, and a carrier to express. She exemplifies Bakhtinian concepts and shows that art is not merely an aesthetic wallpaper, but a performing central character.

Mikhail Bakhtin also talks about 'Carnavalesque' in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* and exemplifies the concept through *Rabelais and His World*. The concept basically speaks of a cultural carnival, where hierarchies and societal norms are overturned for a limited period of time. In Hoover's *Maybe Someday* and *Confess*, the concept of carnivalesque can be applied subtly as both the novels include elements that challenge social norms, and overturn common notions, stereotypes and believes.

This paper uses *Maybe Someday* and *Confess* as texts of choice to identify the use of art as a coping mechanism for the characters and how the perplexed characters find comfort and solace in creating art. It also explores how art act as a catalyst for sentimental revelations and proclamations. The redemptive quality of art is scrutinized. Moreover, the research traverses through the subtle nuances of Bakhtin's carnivalesque within the novels. Lastly, the transformative quality of art is studied. Hoover has managed to pen down two highly emotional novels that are further stimulated with powerful, short dialogues, adding depth and radiating electrifying impact. Hoover demonstrates what Bakhtin theorizes.

Hoover's *Maybe Someday*, opens with betrayal, anger and a storm of emotions when Sydney finds her boyfriend cheating on her with her best friend. The first words of the novel go: "I punched a girl in the face. Not just any girl -but my best friend ..." (Hoover, p.1). The first sentence instantly creates tension as it is seen that Ridge does not utter any dialogues and responds to Sydney via nods, and gestures. The lack of dialogue creates uncertainty and tension in the air. In the later chapter, Sydney tries to converse but is made upset by Ridge being on his phone -this is where Ridge 'texts': "If you aren't going to look at me when you speak, you might want to stick to texting ... I'm deaf, Sydney" (Hoover, p.49). The fact that Ridge is deaf, we witness multiple textual conversations. Hoover adds sentiments of both the characters in between most messages. Bakhtin's dialogism is very much visible here as it gives us an insight on the character's dynamic that is changed and revised with every dialogue. Ridge and Sydney's textual conversations create a silent connection between the reader and the characters, enriching the narrative.

Over the next few chapters, we see how Ridge and Sydney bond with each other over text-based dialogues as they plan revenge on Sydney's former best friend and boyfriend (Hoover, p.62-63). Their friendship grows and the story of Ridge and Sydney begins officially when Ridge requests Sydney to be the songwriter and aid in his ongoing writer's block (Hoover, p.53). Talking about the importance of words, at one instance, Ridge pushes Sydney to recognize her words, and come to peace with the fact that she fell out of love with Hunter long ago.

Bakhtin in his book posits the idea that that dialogue creates an opening to understand one's self (The Dialogic Imagination). In the above dialogic exchange, Sydney comes to a very sensitive realization, attesting Bakhtin's concept.

Overtime, Ridge and Sydney become closer than just friends and over a course of multiple dialogues, we see the bond getting stronger. On one instance, we see the emotions of Sydney expressed:

Why is my heart spazzing out right now? He pushes me until I'm flat on his mattress. He reaches behind him and picks up his guitar, then lays it on the other side of me. He lies down next to me. Calm down, heart. Please. (Hoover, p.106).

Shortly after, we find Ridge fighting his feelings for her, and says to himself: "Stop with the guilt trip, Ridge. You didn't do anything wrong. You aren't doing anything wrong" (Hoover, p.110). Both the above examples show that Sydney and Ridge are fighting with their feelings and realization. This highlights Bakhtin's viewpoint that true realizations do not come in isolation; they require a dialogue. Cutchins quote:

Bakhtin, nevertheless, did not despair over the perceptual isolation we all face. Indeed, this idea led him directly to his most enduring trope—the dialogue. The need for constant dialogue becomes one of the humanizing elements of Bakhtin's work. It constantly prevents him, and us, from thinking reductively (p.81).

The internal dialogue of Ridge and Sydney continue throughout the novel creating a tussle between their desires and their loyalties. Ridge's dialogues with his girlfriend Maggie takes the reader to another rollercoaster of emotions where as much as the reader wishes for Ridge and Sydney to be together, Maggie and Ridge are the golden couple. As they spend their time together Ridge says:

I spend the next half hour reminding myself how much I've missed her. I remind myself how much I love her. I remind myself how good it feels when we're together. I keep reminding myself over and over, because for the past week, it felt as if I was starting to forget (Hoover, p.125).

Blows are also exchanged between Ridge and his best friend when he tries to remind him of Maggie's illness. Warren goes: "You can't do this, Ridge. You made this choice, and I tried to tell you what I thought about it. But you're in it now, and if I have to be the one to remind you of that, so be it," (Hoover, p.114-115).

Ridge and Sydney's feelings are delivered to the audience by similar dialogues and it is very soon before Maggie finds out about Ridge's feelings for Sydney and is rushed to the hospital due to her CFRD acting up. As Ridge tries to fight against Maggie's decision to breakup, to which Maggie responds:

I shouldn't have to fight for us, Ridge. I fight every goddamned day of my life just to survive. I should be able to revel in us, but I can't. ... you give up so much of your life to make sure I'm not having to give up any of mine, and sometimes it's so suffocating," (Hoover, p.292-293).

The conversation between Maggie and Ridge shows how Maggie was always hiding the feeling of suffocation from Ridge. However, in the whole story, it is not mentioned anywhere that Maggie feels this way. This exemplifies and validates Bakhtin's belief that words can have different meaning and everyone perceives them differently, they have conditions. (Clark and Holoquist, p.9)

Hoover ends the novel with the most iconic dialogue of the book: "Hey Syd, sometimes, we got to have bad days to keep the good ones in perspective... well, this is one of the really good days;" Warren says to Sydney as Ridge walks up to the mic and begins to sing, for the first time ever (Hoover, p.345). The story end with Sydney learning sign language and Ridge learning to speak. This factor alone showcases the importance of conversations, and as Bakhtin believes, words require people and perspective to have meaning, otherwise, they are just words. (p.377, The Dialogic Imagination)

In the same vein, Hoover's Confess is charged with emotions. The novel opens with Adam is on his deathbed with 15-year-old Auburn by his side. The young couple weeps in silence as Auburn is scheduled to leave him due to the pressure of his mother who says:

You're fifteen, Auburn. You think what you feel for him is real, but you'll be over him in a month. Those of us who have loved him since the day he was born will have to suffer with his loss until the day we die. Those are the people he needs to be with right now (Hoover, p.5-6).

Analyzing the dialogue, the reader's heart breaks completely knowing how hurtful and harsh these words are. As Adam and Auburn spend their final moments together, Hoover writes their conversation beautifully. At one instance, Auburn shares with Adam how she names people who could die instead of him, at another instance, Adam whispers how he is thankful that she is as pissed at death as he is (Hoover, p.7-9).

The prologue is ended with their final dialogue to each other: "I love you so much," His voice is breathless and full of fear. "I'll love you forever. Even when I can't," My tears fall harder at his words. "And I'll love you forever. Even when I shouldn't," (Hoover, p.10). The dialogue is intense, and innocent; it stays with the audience and establishes empathy towards Auburn and Adam and generates feelings of hatred for Adam's family. Bakhtin rightly believes that dialogism is not just about the dialogue, but about the mannerism in which it forms, and creates a scenario.

Hoover manages to keep the readers curious, right from the first chapter. Owen says: "Are you here to save me?" (p.16). The very first dialogic exchange highlights the future of both the characters and the reader can sense that these characters are going to be each other's rescuer.

Further forward, Lydia has the custody to Auburn's son with Adam, and the conversations between the two keep getting intense. Multiple occurrences suggest how Lydia and Trey (Adam's brother). gaslight Auburn in the name of her son AJ and control her life. At one instance, Auburn confesses to Owen:

She loves AJ as much as I do, and I know he loves her. I'm thankful for that. But I never would have given up custody to her in the first place if I knew it would end up like this. I thought she wanted to help, but now I realize she's using AJ to replace the son she lost (Hoover, p.155).

The sense of defeat and disappointment in Auburn's words radiate through the pages. This is also the first time Auburn speaks about Lydia out loud in the book showing her trust that is slowly building towards Owen. Owen, on the other hand battles with his own traumas. Owen shares that his mother and brother died in a car wreck which caused strain in the relationship of him and his father (Hoover, p.149). Bakhtin believes that during a conversation, we create our realities, and construct our social roles, he argues that what characters say in a dialogue is not fixed, and it can always change (p.24, *The Dialogic Imagination*). The novel returns to its conflict as Trey and Lydia press fake charges against Owen and demands their separation. Auburn says to her roommate:

I never thought I'd be in this position again. A position where I know I'm right where I belong, but there's nothing I can do that can keep me there. It reminds me of the day I had to say goodbye to Adam I'm scared to say good-bye. But I have to say good-bye, and it hurts like hell (Hoover, p.241).

The novel ends with Auburn saving Owen, and managing to collect enough evidence against Trey and Lydia to get the custody of her son. As Owen and Auburn reunite, a conversation between Owen and Adam from five years earlier is narrated where Owen creates his first ever painting for the dying Adam. The painting is of two hands trying to reach each other, but there remains a space between them. Adam inscribes: "I'll love you forever. Even when I can't," (p.300-301).

In Bakhtinian context, dialogism surpasses the spectrum of conversations; it also exists in the formation of narrative structure, the internal conflicts of characters, discourses and artistic elements that layer the account. Bakhtin believes that art is a dialogue on its own; it is a complete character (*The Dialogic Imagination*).

Speaking about the artistic dialogues in the novel, in Hoover's *Maybe Someday*, music plays a crucial role in shaping the narrative. Colleen Hoover collaborated with Griffin Peterson to come up with an independent sound track inclusive of eight songs. An example can be found in chapter eleven when Sydney struggles to come write the song 'Maybe Someday':

Watching him from here
Seeing something from so far away
Get a little closer every day, Thinking that I want to make it mine
I'd run to him you if I could stand
But I can't make that demand
But what I want I can't demand
Cuz what I want is you
If I could be his, I would wait And if I can't be yours now I'll wait here on this ground
Till you come, till you take me away

Maybe someday, Maybe someday (Hoover, p.162).

As Sydney scribbles through the song, Ridge takes the notepad, and add a few lines to it:

Nothing good can come this way Lines are drawn, but then they fade,

For her I bend, for you I break (Hoover, p.164).

If looked closely, the song narrates the feeling of both Sydney and Ridge. The art that they have produced is a reflection of what their hearts feel. Sydney too feels the intense effect of Ridge's added words. Her emotions penetrate her heart, and she physically begins to feel the words. The words of Ridge show that art in any of its forms -music, here, act as an outlet for your emotions. Ridge is seen to be calm after writing the lyrics, whereas Sydney feels the depth of the lyrics he just created. In Bakhtinian context, art act as a whole character here, and pierces Sydney's heart.

In the beginning, when Sydney is heartbroken and writes lyrics to the song 'Living a lie', Ridge pushes her to go through them again, and realize that she never felt good with her ex-boyfriend. Ridge says to her: "You only miss the idea of him. You weren't happy with him even before you found out he was cheating," (Hoover, p.81). Sydney reevaluates her lyrics and wonders how art comes from within, and reflects what goes inside of one's heart even when they themselves are not too aware of it. Art is hard-work when you do not feel something. Bakhtin writes that the art is alive and lives but it cannot live in a 'vacuum' (p.275, *Art and Answerability*). Here, Sydney is capable of writing only because of the feelings that her heart is filled with. If she doesn't have feelings, according to Bakhtin, she cannot produce art.

In the end of the novel, Ridge whisper-sings 'Let it Begin' and Sydney's reaction to hearing his voice for the first time serve as the best conclusion to this artistic novel. This dialogical connection between the two links the audience in, and their story lingers in the heart forever.

Hoover's use of artistic dialogism and intense narrative does not end with this. *Confess* is jampacked with an artistic narrative. *Confess*, however, unlike *Maybe Someday* uses visual arts for forming an arty tale. The protagonist, Owen, uses other people's anonymously sent confessions to paint. These confessions within themselves are a silent, dialogic interaction between the one who confesses and Owen. The confessions range from innocent, too profound and to which Owen said "I wish I never read," (Hoover, p.68). Just like Hoover collaborated with Peterson for the soundtrack of *Maybe Someday*, she teamed up with Danny O'Connor for the artwork that is laid on the pages of *Confess*.

Art becomes the central character when the worlds of Auburn and Owen meet. Their love revolves around staying in the gallery, and looking at different paintings and confessions all day. At one instance Owen says:

"When I'm painting, I create a story in my head of what inspired the confession and who it came from. But when I find out that the image I had while painting doesn't match the actual image standing in front of me, it somehow invalidates the art for me," (Hoover, p.56).

At one instance Auburn asks: "Have you always wanted to be an artist?" to which Owen responds: "I didn't choose to be an artist. I think it kind of chose me," Here, Owen's response shows that it wasn't planned, external influences pushed him into creating artwork. At this point, the reader knows that he is speaking of Adam.

As Bakhtin believes art to be a dialogue, a symbolic act can be drawn out from the novel. Towards the end of the novel, as Owen and Auburn are getting close, much to Trey and Lydia's aversion, Trey breaks into the art studio while Owen is away. He burns the artworks and break the studio's structure. In hindsight, Auburn and Owen created a dialogic relationship while bonding over art. This dialogic relationship became a pivotal turn in the plot. Trey's violent attack on the studio is not a result of physical aggression, instead it is an attempt to silence the ongoing dialogue between the artwork, Owen and Auburn. (p.255)

Five years earlier, when Owen met Adam to show him the artwork he created, Adam was beyond surprised to hear that it was his first painting. "Is this your first attempt?" Adam asks in disbelief. I nod. "Yeah. Probably my last, too," He immediately shakes his head. "I hope not," (Hoover, p.304). And just like that, five years later, Auburn's fate leads her to Owen's gallery. Bakhtin, talking about art and literature suggests that the consumer must "encompass it, give it form, and consummate it" (*Art*, p.306).

Hoover's integration of art in fiction can be seen as a dialogic instrument. This union boosted the narrative structure by merging different standpoints and voices. Art gleams as an essential

conversation starter in the novels and allows the characters to create a bridge between their past and their future, while they rest in the middle. The internal state of an artist can be externalized by using different mediums of art as an outlet. Art makes the emotions tangible. Bakhtinian concept of artistic act revolves around the translation of internal sentiments into any sort of external state. Writing a song or painting on the canvas can bring out suppressed emotions, and the created art can also be perceived, and understood by the viewer, making it a mode of revelation.

In Colleen Hoover's *Maybe Someday*, there are multiple instances when Sydney and Ridge use art to reveal their feelings, and proclaim what their heart holds. In the very beginning Sydney writes the lyrics to the song 'Living a Lie', where she unintentionally declares that her love for Hunter is holding her down, that he does not know her as much as she would like, and that that he thinks that the relationship is fine, when in reality its not (p.82). On another instance, Ridge and Sydney write the songs 'Maybe Someday' (p.164) and 'I'm in Trouble' (p.205) that are ideally their revelation of the feelings that they are developing for each other and how they should not be feeling this way. Finally, in the finale of the novel, Ridge surprises Sydney with a performance though he does not say anything but he sings 'Hold onto You' (p.349) to reveal his feelings for Sydney and 'Let it Begin' (p.352) to tell her that they can finally be together.

Similarly, the art becomes a medium of several revelations in Hoover's *Confess*. (Five years earlier, Lydia decides to throw away the art supplies of Adam to 'make more room' (p.294) which reveals that Lydia is practically coming to terms with the fact that Adam will be gone, and they will need to clear his space. Hence, she decides to throw them away. Here, Auburn is sad and upset as she stares at the art supplies -this reveals that Auburn is not yet ready to let go. The same supplies are taken by young Owen (p.295), and he decides to paint -his painting of the two hands (p.305) that cannot meet reveal his internal struggle of not being able to know Auburn, as well as bearing witness to the end of Adam and Auburn's love story. Five years later, standing in Auburn's hallway, he stares at the same painting and puts his hand between the two hands (p.73), revealing that Auburn and Adam are now connected through Auburn and Owen's love -that he is the second fate that Adam wished she deserves (p.306). Bakhtinian concepts suggest that art is a dialogue, and a mode of self-expression, an opening towards the inside. In the examples above, this can be seen and understood that Hoover has revealed the characters' emotions through art.

Besides being an outlet for emotions, art is known for its therapeutic nature. Art therapy is very common and currently popular phenomenon, and apparently, very beneficial for mental health.. From the point of view of Bakhtin's, the procedure of creating art, interacting with it, and then interpreting it can be seen as a dialogic interaction, which can be healing, and introspective. Colleen Hoover exemplifies that art is dialogue, and dialogue leads to introspection..

In Colleen Hoover's *Maybe Someday*, there are multiple examples that showcase that the characters use art as therapy, and to cope with their internal conflicts. In the very beginning if the story, it is found out that Sydney enjoys listening to Ridge's guitar and she makes time to come out on the balcony, lying to her best friend. She says: "I tell Tori I come out here to get homework done, because I don't want to admit that the guitar is the only reason, I'm outside every night at eight, like clockwork " (p.9). Music is Sydney's passion, and her father never allowed her to pursue it. The daily routine act as a coping mechanism for Sydney. In the later chapter, we also learn that Ridge plays guitar to hear his heart beat as he is deaf; we find out that he too deals with his emotions by playing music. Their bond grows over music, and they also use music to then fight their feelings.

Likewise in Hoover's *Confess*, it can be seen that art indeed plays the role of being therapeutic and is used as an escape for the characters. Owen's art gallery becomes a place of sanctuary -for him and eventually for Auburn. It is also a known fact that in early childhood, Owen chose to find his escape in the about-to-be thrown paints as he created his first canvas (p.295). At that time, Owen was going through the loss of his mother and his brother, and art allowed him to cope with it -so much that he ended up being an artist. Owen mentions that he always paints his mother when he misses her (p.151). Auburn in the book is seen to be crying at some paintings, and smiling at some in the gallery (p.66-67). Owen and Auburn find their solace in the art gallery. Trey's breaking in and attack on the gallery also act as a catalyst for Auburn to take an action against him. The fact that she never said a word in front of Lydia or Trey but the attack on the gallery lead her to sending him to prison reveals how her safe-haven was destructed, and hence she shattered the glass ceilings (p.255). Owen and Auburn end their story while staring at the painting of the two hands, coping with

their past, and accepting their present -all in the shadow of an art piece (p.293). Art is a form of coping mechanism -and when one is done coping from their unhealed traumas, they rise like Hoover's characters always do.

Externalization of one's internal turmoil offers a bridge towards healing. Bakhtin posits in various works of his that art functions as a mirror towards one's inside and the self-reflection allows open catharsis of sentiments that are normally marginalized and suspended in daily routine. Art also opens the doors of empathy towards one's self and others. This recognition allows oneself to remove themselves and other from a pedestal and view everyone in from a humanized perspective.

In *Maybe Someday*, Sydney begins to write songs about Hunter, and then about Ridge to overcome her troubled feelings. She finds traces of empathy for Hunter when she revisits her time song 'Living a Lie' realizing that she fell out of love long before her breakup. She tries to redeem herself by composing music, and eventually forgiving Hunter. The biggest factor in the novel is Ridge choosing to be a musician despite being deaf. This can be viewed in a way that Ridge is making up for his inability to hear or speak by redeeming himself through music something that other people can hear. Because he cannot express himself through words, he uses music as a medium to redeem this inability -he uses music as a redemption to his otherwise lack of expression. Moreover, we realize that Maggie listens and reads the new songs of Ridge, and this makes her realize that Ridge and Sydney have a deeper connection than she ever had with him. She redeems herself; she sets herself and Ridge free of their relationship. In the end of the novel, Ridge turns to music, and finally sings for Sydney -as a redemption to everything that they have missed -an attempt to make things right (Hoover, p.353).

In *Confess*, art throughout act as a redemptive force -especially through the idea of confessions. The fact that someone can anonymously write down a confession, unburden themselves, knowing that it will be turned into an art piece is an act of empathy This can also be viewed in this way that by reading other people's confession, generating a dialogue with them, and by painting them, Owen somehow thinks that he is redeeming these people -somehow, he is redeeming himself. Owen often paints his mother as an act of redeeming himself for the unintentional mistake that he made. Auburn often reacts to Owen's different art pieces. There are art works that she admires, and then those that send her into deep thoughts. Five years earlier, Adam sees the painting of two hands that don't meet and requests Owen to send this to Auburn while he inscribes on it: "I will always love you, even when I can't." (p.306). He sends this painting to Auburn as a final act of redemption -for dying, for leaving her alone and for the mistakes of his parents.

Hoover skillfully lets art perform as a tool of redemption. As the characters of both the novels get involve in a Bakhtinian dialogue with their art pieces, they gradually learn to process their emotions and encapsulate their negativities within words, colors and hopes.

Bakhtin's concept of carnivalesque is a critique of the hierarchal structure of our society. Though rooted in festive cultural traditions, the essence and main reasoning behind carnival is to challenge and rebel against the dominance of societal boundaries, and to free one's self in a place that is suspended of negative judgement (Rabelais and His World). In art, carnivalesque is situated as a rebellion against societal norms. Carnavalesque opposes the common beliefs of harmony and embraces chaos at the cost of being honest (Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics).

In Colleen Hoover's *Maybe Someday*, the technique of carnivalesque can be subtly seen initially in Sydney's decision to pursue music despite her father's strict orders; his father prohibited her desire of being a musician by saying it is 'a life of mediocrity' and that it is a 'waste' (p.9). In chapter 1, Sydney is seen enjoying the rhythm of the guitar as she murmurs and creates her own lyrics. (p.19) In the later chapters, she officially becomes the songwriter for the band Sound of Cedar and opts for it as a profession. Furthermore, in the novel, Ridge and Sydney finds themselves stuck in an ethically ambiguous situation where fidelity is questioned. As the concept of carnivalesque believes, when the people are in a carnival, they must free themselves from the outer world. Sydney and Ridge, despite being good human beings end up getting involved in a borderline intimate relationship. Though all the odds go against their linear progression, Ridge and Sydney lets them be disrupted and dive away from traditional norms. These contradictory notions push the reader to think beyond what the society has taught, and understand the complexity of true human emotions and the manner in which the society twists it.

In *Confess*, Hoover employs the elements of carnivalesque especially through confessions. The whole act of confessing hidden secrets -whether positive or negative inverts the traditional dynamics. Owen's art studio is a hub of grotesque carnivalesque where people can anonymously, and for a short period of time, be themselves and akin to the traditional carnival, forget the orthodox boundaries.

Bakhtinian carnivalesque is a powerful lens to view how art is capable of subverting stereotypes. The subversion can include either of the two -grotesque imagery or satire, in both ways, carnivalesque creates a disruption in the traditional norms and break boundaries.

Art is a catalyst that transforms an individual through self-exploration and introspection. The creative process allows a dialogue between the art and the artist which enables him to confront his sentiments, past and hidden traumas. Through the process of creating art, one might allow the healing of pent up traumas and emotions.

In *Maybe Someday*, at the beginning of the novel, Sydney is emotionally unstable and her song reflects an overflow that she isn't aware of. By the end of the novel, Sydney is more relaxed and reformed. In the start, Ridge struggles with writing music. As Sydney enters his life, and he begins to introspect, his flow gradually begins. At the end of the novel, Ridge composes multiple songs in a matter of days because his mind has reached a clarity and he is free of his inner conflicts. Ridge's initial songs are about struggle and despair, whereas his final songs are about hope and new beginning. Sydney in this novel is an example of how art gives the person strength and warmth, and Ridge exemplifies how art is transformed overtime.

In Hoover's *Confess*, in between the plain walls of the hospital, Owen decides to paint his heart out. Art transforms his view at life, and the next thing the reader knows is that Owen owns an art gallery filled with paintings that sell out in a day. It is evident how art changes Owen's life. Owen also paints a portrait of his father in the most grotesque way in the beginning of the novel.

As he moves on with life, and reflects on everything, he comes to term with the reality, moves pass the traumas, and views the humanized version of his father. By the end of the novel, we are made aware that Owen and his father has mended their relationship. Auburn and Owen transform their relationship and grow closer through a bridge of art. Owen's gallery becomes their safe space where they can openly express themselves. As Owen and Auburn reflect throughout the novel through art, by the end it is evident that both of them are more secure, forgiving and free.

Bakhtinian suggest that dialogues are already filled with enough information that is tangled and has many, many perspectives. The only way to detangle is to interact socially. (p.276-277, *The Dialogic Imagination*). As our characters interact with themselves, they find the path towards healing. Art and interaction allow you to understand, reflect and find your own freedom.

Findings

It is deduced that Colleen Hoover has skillfully derived emotions from dialogues in a very delicate manner. Her dialogues have given depth to what otherwise were simple stories. The use of dialogues in an artistic manner aligns with Bakhtinian idea of art. From the narrative style of Hoover, it is obvious that her take on art as a dialogue is similar to that of Bakhtin's. Bakhtin also believes in the dialogic nature of art, and Colleen Hoover has established this in an ingenious manner.

This paper explored Bakhtinian carnivalesque with reference to Hoover's novels. Hoover's novels include subtle nuances of carnivalesque, and she has beautifully tied the concept within her narrative. Furthermore, the paper dives deeper into art, and views it as a catalyst for the revelation of emotions. Upon analysis, it is obvious that art has accelerated the process of revelations, and it has added a depth to the plot. Art is also viewed as a form of therapy in this chapter, and with dialogues and instances, the results of this hypothesis were positive as well. Lastly, art is reviewed to have redemptive powers, and the capability of transforming a person through self-reflection and dialogue. The examples proved that art not only transform its artist but it also grows, and transforms once the artist has matured. The paper concludes that art is remarkable and it does have powers to heal, confront and move on. It also aligns directly with Bakhtinian concepts of dialogism. The study delved into the dialogic depths and artistic narratives, revealing how these inclusions deepen emotional experiences and contribute to a richer narrative texture. The integration of Bakhtin's concept of art in literature further enriches the narrative structure, while music and visual art act as catalysts for emotional revelations and character transformations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Art is therapeutic and supports the narrative in a very wonderful manner. A simple story can become multilayered and intricate if the focus is on peeking the sentiments of the audience. Every writer has unique traits that are attributed to him/her, it is all about what they are viewed as. As Bakhtin believes, word is alien, and it only gets perspective when people interact. It is also deduced that contemporary fiction is what the modern generation wants -and not analyzing it through classical literary lenses is going a step backward. Contemporary fiction does have emotional depths and layered narratives. Broader and further research can and must be done to view the new age literary itineraries -those that are open to exploration.

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