



A Dialogism: The Narrative of Resistance in Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy*

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy* (1993) in light of Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogism. The present study explores the significance of dialogism in the given novel which tells the story of a marginalized young boy living in neo-colonized Ireland in the 1960s. Bakhtin believes that the development of signification between the "self" and the "other" is called dialogue through which human beings define their existence as individuals in polyphonic societies. The protagonist of *The Butcher Boy* is a non-conformist, unwilling to follow social rules. He creates his very own way of dialogism with his surroundings and ends up in a mental hospital and finally a prison, showing the author's approval of Bakhtin's viewpoint towards the importance of dialogue in shaping human beings' consciousness and existence in the world. Moreover, this article attempts to clarify the resistance of the main character before his society's hierarchical structure that makes him a perfect example of a marginalized hero disobeying rules and regulations imposed by the authorities to gain an independent resolution.

Keywords: Bakhtin; Dialogism; Dialogue; Patrick McCabe; Polyphony; Resistance; The Butcher Boy

1. Introduction

Published in 1992, *The Butcher Boy* is the most famous novel by the Irish author Patrick McCabe. The book follows the life of Francie Brady who is a normal young boy in the beginning. As the novel progresses, following a series of unfortunate circumstances, Francie Brady slowly becomes a cold-hearted sociopath who eventually kills the woman he accuses of being the cause of all his problems. The novel acts as an opportunity for the reader to follow the young boy and the difficulties he faces that, along with his slowly regressing mental health, turn him into a monster who can only see one solution to all his problems: murder. Francie lives in a small town in Ireland in the 1960s. At the very beginning of the novel, the reader is introduced to the family situation in the Brady home. Francie suffers from a dysfunctional family with a suicidal mother and an alcoholic father.

In the novel, Francie's drastically changes from a schoolboy to a hysteric killer who murders Mrs. Nugent, the mother of his childhood enemy, Philip who lives Francie's fantasy. "When I was a young lad twenty or thirty or forty years ago, I lived in a small town where they were all after me on account of what I done on Mrs. Nugent" (McCabe, 1993, p. 1). Mrs. Nugent is an unforgivable sinner to Francie as she is the symbol of Englishness; moreover, she has an air of superiority toward Francie's broken family; she labels Francie and his family as "The Pigs" (McCabe, 1993, p. 7). In the story we watch him taking his revenge by killing Mrs. Nugent with the gun he uses to kill pigs at the local abattoir, cutting her up and burying her remains around for an entire day in his meat cart. Francie is admitted to an industrial school where he is abused and molested, after that to a mental hospital and finally a prison; thus, it can be concluded that he is a victim of a social system full of interrelated institutions that hides the less desirable elements related to social phenomena such as poverty in Ireland. In such a context Francie becomes an insane monster created by the society and community as a product of isolation and misunderstanding.

The present research tends to apply the Bakhtinian dialogism into the selected novel. Bakhtin believes that dialogue or dialogic sense of the world, is best found in a novel as a literary genre. Bakhtin argues that language is an intrinsically social, inter-individual phenomenon (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 121). Thus, he relates human being's existence in society to a dialogic relationship with others and indicates that dialogism enables characters to have a conscious act and react. For Bakhtin, characters of a novel should have their independent voices and there is no final word from the author. It guarantees the freedom and diversity of ideas throughout the novel. Consequently, Bakhtinian analysis can be regarded as a contextual one that reflects the era in which characters of a novel are introduced.



Francie, the protagonist, is an introverted person unable to interact with others, he meets various groups of people and brings his consciousness and existence to the scene and participates dialogue with all the characters around in his society. The fact that the protagonist and other characters are reacting freely and differently to each other, sometimes even in opposition to one another, ensures us that all the characters are authentic and this unavoidably creates a polyphonic context in the novels. Polyphony refers to the multi-voicedness which paves the way for creating dialogic relations in a society. In such context, the existence of the character means engaging in a never-ending process of continuous dialogues with others that guarantees the development of the self. There is an intentional tendency for them to create internal dialogues among external dialogues. Through Bakhtinian lenses, various voices are being shown through the narration of the protagonist that at the very first level seems a monologic narration. But in fact, this novel is a polyphonic one that is crossroad of various voices. Based on the storyline of the story, Francie's fate is catastrophic; he is stuck in mental disease and becomes the monster who shocks his hometown with his brutal murder.

This article also acknowledges the fact that although the main character is not creating too many dialogic discourses at first glance, he tells the readers too much about his historical and cultural context through his internal and external dialogues with others in society. He comes from a marginalized group of society, unseen and unheard, who stand against the hierarchies opposed by English cultural domination of his motherland. To be more precise, as he is left aside by his surroundings, he suffers from outsidersness that pushes away the negation of identity and distinction of him.

2. Literature Review

“Who Is Francie Pig? Self-Identity and Narrative Reliability in *The Butcher Boy*” (2000) written by John Scaggs is an article printed in *Irish University Review Magazine* in Spring-Summer. The article focuses on finding Francie's identity as the narrator of the novel. It also studies the matter of unsuitable language he uses to say what he means. It suggests that according to Jacques Lacan Francie does not speak, he is spoken and that makes his narration beyond his control which creates the specter of unreliable narrative haunting the entire novel.

“Satire and Trauma in Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy*” (2017) by [Melania Terrazas](#) is a beneficial article that studies the impact of social, economic and political circumstances on Francie Brady's psychological state as a part of a community. It investigates the post-traumatic effects of a difficult childhood and upbringing on Francie's character. The way he interacts with others in society can be studied through the psychological concepts presented in this article. The article defines how McCabe's novel mirrors the daily life of a

dysfunctional person unable to create dialogue at a formal level by using third- and first-person narrative and stream of consciousness.

In *We Won't Make It Out Alive: Patrick McCabe and the Horrors of the Irish Mundane* (2010) Kate Walls studies *The Butcher Boy* as a classic gothic novel characterizing the social situation of Irish people through a combination of narrative complexity, emotional hysteria and hopelessness. An alcoholic abusive father, a tyrannical church that not only ignores the suffering of the poor but also abuse their children without receiving any punishment are some of the features described in this novel which can be related closely to Francie Brady's fatal behaviors.

3. Method

3.1. Corpus

The corpus of the present study includes Patrick McCabe's novel, *The Butcher Boy*, published by Picador in London on April 1992. The novel grabbed a great deal of attention worldwide and brought credit for its author winning the Irish Times/Aer Lingus Literature Prize in 1992. This article attempts to explore the Bakhtinian dialogism and other related concepts. Dialogism and all its subcategory concepts are presented in Bakhtin's most important books *The Dialogical Imagination* (1981) and *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984). The novel is chosen as its protagonist chooses a unique way of creating dialogism to merge with his surrounding; a surrounding which does not approve any of his actions as a marginalized member who cannot conform to its oppressive regulations. The author not only portrays the protagonist's life but also gives a clear picture of his social atmosphere filled with various voices. By creating these different voices within the story, McCabe helps the readers to gain a better understanding of the corrupt Irish society of the time in which Francie lives in. To be more thorough, the characters' voices are explicit utterances representing the author's implicit voice.

3.2. Theoretical Background

Among all of Bakhtin's theories, dialogism is the most fundamental one which is not a simple verbal act of interaction but rather a universal communication that plays basic role not only in the culture of a society but also in human existence. He believed that dialogue creates the possibility of language, language emerges from dialogue and is conversely the essential medium of dialogue. For Bakhtin dialogism is the defining characteristic of a novel putting light on social diversity of speech types and a literary work is a ground for the dialogic interaction of multiple voices and discourses which are to be considered a social phenomenon, not a verbal one. This interaction takes place in a multi-



voiced atmosphere which is called polyphony and by means of multi-languagedness which is called heteroglossia. Each character emerges in the dialogic context composed of diverse social contexts. Thus, each utterance's meaning depends on various factors such as the social situation in which it is spoken, the relationship between the speaker and the others, and the relationship between the utterance and the prior utterances to which it responds (Abrams, 1997, p. 62-3). What interested Bakhtin was the social fact of several people exchanging words with one another in a room as it was the idea that each word contains within itself diverse, discriminating, often contradictory talking components. Understood in this way, dialogue becomes a model of the creative process. It assumes that the healthy growth of any consciousness depends on its continual interaction with other voices, or worldviews (Emerson, 1997. P. 36). A dialogical work constantly engages with and is informed by other works and voices, and seeks to alter or inform other works.

Another crucial concept of Bakhtin for understanding dialogism is polyphony. Polyphony in simple words refers to the existence of many different voices and to be more precise it can be defined as the existence of multiple voices side by side in a literary work. The concept of polyphony was first introduced by Bakhtin in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984) in which Bakhtin suggests that Dostoevsky gives all his characters' voices as much authority as the narrator's voice (39). Bakhtin believes that Dostoevsky invented the polyphonic novel in which each voice has its own perspective, validity and narrative weight. As the author of such a novel does not place his or her voice between the characters and the readers it feels like the book is written by multiple characters and not from a single author's viewpoint. Therefore, the main point is the fact that the voice of the author is not a supreme and authorizing voice in a polyphonic novel and each of the characters have their own words standing side by side with both author and the narrator as a result of a dialogic context.

3.3. Procedure

In *The Butcher Boy*, McCabe introduces a protagonist who can be considered as a one-of-a-kind. An introvert unable to merge with peers, neighbors, teachers and others in society who at the same time meets various groups of people and bring their consciousness and existence to the scene and participate in dialogues with all the characters around in his novel. Bakhtin believes that dialogue, to be more precise, dialogic sense of the world, is best found in novel as a literary genre. Bakhtin argues that language is an intrinsically social, inter-individual phenomenon (Bakhtin, 1986. p. 121). Thus, he relates human being's existence in society to a dialogic relationship with others and indicates that dialogism enables characters to have a conscious act and react. For Bakhtin, characters of a novel should have their independent voices and there is no final word from the

author which guarantees the freedom and diversity of ideas throughout the novel. Consequently, Bakhtinian analysis can be regarded as a contextual one that reflects the era in which characters of a novel are introduced. The fact that the protagonists and characters are reacting freely and differently to each other, sometimes even in opposition to one another, ensures us that all the characters are authentic and this unavoidably creates a polyphonic context in the novels. There is an unfinalizability of dialogue that undermines the hierarchical structure of the society that tries to push the protagonist to be an obedient one. In other words, the existence of the character means engaging in a never-ending process of continuous dialogue with others that guarantees the development of the self.

4. Discussion

4.1. Dialogism in Regard to Neo-Colonial Irish Identity

The novel narrates the story of Francie Brady, the butcher boy, and his radical transformation from a schoolboy to a hysteric killer who murders Mrs. Nugent, an unforgivable sinner to Francie as she is the symbol of Englishness. Moreover, she has the air of superiority toward Francie's broken family and labels Francie and his family as "The Pigs" (McCabe, 1993, p. 7). Having an ambivalent relationship with the community and with an idealization of the past, Francie finds it impossible to reach a definite answer to his selfhood in front of the society. His schizophrenic identity leaves him a socially marginalized alone soul lacking a dialogical world. He admires the life led by the Nugents as the representatives of dominant cultural values. This admiration of the dominant power is one of the key characterizations of the neo colonized people described in the novel. While Mikhail Bakhtin considers the polyphonic novel as a labyrinthine, colorful world that gives vent to heterogeneous voices, neocolonial theorists attempt to investigate aspects and factors of hegemonic tyranny and discuss the voice of the marginalized and the disadvantaged people as the topic of literary criticism.

The neocolonial Irish context of the novel, the 1960s when the legacy of colonialism continued in Ireland, where the structures of inequality continue to play out and disrupt democratic processes, deserves a few words in relation to Bakhtinian reading of it. Regarding satirical rhetoric, *The Butcher Boy* emerged in the early 1990s, a decade that witnessed a distinct shift in Ireland's willingness to face its past. Although traditionally silent when confronted with controversial social problems, Ireland began to "speak out" in the 1990s with a new openness that was most evident in controversies given broad coverage in the media – particularly those focusing attention on the suffering of children and other marginalized citizens (Terrazas, 2017, p. 3). McCabe adopts a polyphonic and dialogic narrative to offer a realistic image of Ireland in neocolonial period.



He also offers various voices and discourses to push the dominant discourse of colonialism into a dialogic structure. Francie at first, is a normal youth who creates dialogues with the family and after that with the school and friends. In the first stage, he does not experience a healthy dialogism with his parents who have a broken relationship as they are never accepted as a part of society which has always neglected them as the poor marginalized characters. The first interaction between Francie Brady's parents consists of his father coming home from the pub and initiating a fierce argument with his wife: "But it wasn't all over and when I [Francie] stopped listening to the cars I'd hear him: God's curse the fucking day I ever set eyes on you! The next day ... her face was red and patchy and hot like she'd been sitting bent over the fire only there was no fire" (McCabe, 1993, p. 8). As a schoolboy, Francie spends most of his time with his best friend, Joe Purcell, talking about comic book monsters and cowboys. However, after returning from reform school, he finds Joe befriended with Phillip Nugent. His attempt to be a part of family and peers as a dialogic act fails and leaves him alone in the world. He loses his grip on reality and set upon uncontrollable savagery which shocks his hometown. All of his ideals are rejected by the society which undergoes the consequences of neo-colonialism and by the government trying to push values and norms to gain a monologic voice.

To maintain a favorable understanding, the states usually employ a unifying discourse that according to Bakhtin this unifying discourse, "monoglossia", emerges at once as literary and political works, leading the nation away from traces of colonial subjugation and oppression, and towards national singularity and cultural reformation (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 79). According to Lukacs, the modern man not only externalizes his sense of irrelevance to his current state but scolds his status quo ante (the previous situation), which is social integration and the formation of a social self (Lukacs, 2006, p. 290-292). In other words, social mobility turns into an impossible exchange for the modern man as his path of self-formation shifts towards a ritual of negativity and negative self-formation (Baudrillard, 2001, p. 39-42). This theme of negativity and failure resulting from colonial oppression is embedded in modern Irish literature that includes *The Butcher Boy* as one of its most famous representatives.

Ireland is a country familiar with war, famine and colonialism of English empire. The communal identity that Francie's hometown aims to form without the Bradys is separated from the Irish stereotypes they represent. It is apparent throughout the town that English qualities are highly valued, as seen through the Nugents as well as Francie's Uncle Alo. The town trying to adopt more and more English identity, must reject the Bradys because they embody the stereotypes which the community aims to leave behind. In such a context Francie Brady becomes a rebellious Irish identity who represents challenging State's structure of formation and patriarchy. When Annie, Francie's mother

returns from the mental hospital, her identity as part of the Brady family is reaffirmed. Francie describes: "She looked into my eyes and said: We don't want to be like the Nugents. We don't want to be like any of them! We'll show them – won't we Francie? They'll envy us yet! We're the Bradys. Francie! The Bradys" (McCabe, 1993, p. 17). The result is a dialectical account of Francie as an antiauthoritarian character, who sets out to challenge the nation's dualistic historical memory of abuse and oppression; "

The fountain wasn't frozen it was spraying away goodo on the Diamond so I sat down beside it for a while. There was one thing I knew about that fountain. They had put it there for Queen Victoria the same time they built the Jubilee Road in honor of her visit to the town that year. Except for one thing – she never came. (McCabe, 1993, p. 103)

Francie Brady, an outcast in society, does not have a sense of belonging to nationalism because of its architecture of division, rather he admires his isolation. This sense of alienation helps rebellious characters such as him to have an identity and to be recognized. In this way, Francie becomes another stereotype of a modern Irish protagonist who has nothing to do with the future and is haunted by nostalgia and resentment of the past. Unlike nationalists, those who have submitted to the State's politics of formation, Francie's indulgence in the past has one objective: To emphasize his departure from "all the beautiful things of this world which are nothing but lies" (McCabe, 1993, p. 198), to gain further independence and "unlock something precious" (McCabe, 1993, p. 78). He employs carnivalesque narrative to mock national authoritarianism. By mocking the state's patriarchy Francie reveals the marginalized children's identities and their social non-conformity. In this sense, McCabe raises a question related to post-independent Irish society: who is Francie Brady?

Francie embraces his broken identity as the pig, named by Mrs. Nugent, within the community especially in the presence of Mrs. Nugent. Francie's response to the trauma of the Nugents is contrasted with the response of his best friend Joe, who is able to create a fully integrated identity. For Bakhtin, identity is shaped only through dialogism and socialization and in response to the other "I am conscious of myself and become myself only while revealing myself for another, through another, and with the help of another. The most important acts constituting self-consciousness are determined by a relationship toward another consciousness" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 287). Thus, reading from Bakhtinian perspective the way Francie creates dialogue with the others is the main characteristic that shapes his self and identity. His Simultaneous rage and admiration for the Nugents are the junction where Bakhtinian theory of dialogism meets neocolonial theories. The Nugents have everything that was stolen from Francie; a warm home, a clean house, and a supporting family. Philip Nugent takes piano lessons, has an enviable collection of comics and



wears a smart school blazer: “He was like Winker Watson out of the Dandy in this get-up of his only Winker was always up to devilment and Philip was the opposite” (McCabe, 1993, p. 6). Francie longs for the stability and happiness of the Nugent family and blames the Nugents for his disastrous life, and takes his cursory revenge by desecrating their neat and polished home: “What do pigs do? They do poo! Yes, pigs are forever doing poo all over the farmyard, they have the poor farmer's heartbroken” (McCabe, 1993, p. 44). He is stuck between loyalty to his family and his desire for a normal family and when telling Tiddly, the priest who abuses him, about his home he imagines Mrs. Nugent bragging to his mother: “Do you know what he did? He asked me to be his mother. He said he'd give anything not to be a pig. That's what he did on you Mrs. Brady. That's why he came to our house! Her breast was choking me again, lukewarm in my throat” (McCabe, 1993, p. 97). Ultimately, he lacks any form of identity and is cast in the role of the community's other.

In total, McCabe forces Francie to confront the half-English Nugent family who has roots in both Ireland and Britain bounded by imperial arrogance in perceiving the Irish identity. Mrs. Nugent's belittling comments on Francie's family and calling them pigs is the starting point for Francie's eventual path of self-formation. Her remarks to the Brady family can be expanded to a historically discriminatory that makes the way for the story to unfold a carnival narrative. Both the notions of dialogism and carnivaization can be related to the nationalistic and neo-colonial situation of how England sees Ireland: “barren, unsophisticated wild land” (Smyth, 1997, p. 44-45) just the way the Nugents see the Bradys.

4.2. Dialogism and the Sense of Otherness

In Bakhtinian dialogism individuality means only in relation to society and one's existence completely reinstates by the existence of others. The self and the other play role in an endless relation to one another as inseparable parts of a network. To be more precise, dialogue is a triangle constituted by the utterance of the speaking subject, the reply from the other and the context in which this relation between two sides happens. What makes a dialogue possible is the outsidership of the subjects; they should be a self-distancing without attempt to project any ideology on the other. Otherwise, the dialogism is degraded to a monologism that denies the existence of the other. Thus, Bakhtin presents co-existence of multiple voices instead of the binarism of self and the other-centeredness. In this sense, a self can look into himself or herself from the window of the other and gains a new perspective. This process happens for Francie in most destructive way; he accepts the pig identity projected on him by Mrs. Nugent and acts accordingly. “Yes, pigs are forever doing poo all over the farmyard” (McCabe, 1993, p. 44).

As mentioned before, the novel is the best literary genre reflecting verbal discourse that creates “means for displaying otherness” (Holquist, 1990, p. 89). Speaking of verbal discourse, the manifestation of heteroglossia by Bakhtin in his essay “Discourse in the Novel” in his *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981) would be clarifying:

The novel can be defined as a diversity of social speech types...and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized. The internal stratification of any single national language into social dialects, characteristic group behavior, professional jargons, generic languages, language of generations and age groups, tendentious languages, language of the authorities, of various circles and of passing fashions, languages that serve the specific sociopolitical purposes of the day, even of the hour ... this internal stratification present in every language at any given moment of its historical existence is the indispensable prerequisite for the novel as a genre. (262- 263)

It can be understood that in relation to the concept of otherness, dialogism grants the subjectivity of the speaker and the listener and rejects objectivity. To remain distinct from the other, or what Bakhtin names outsidersness refers to the independence of subjects in the dialogism.

The main issue for Francie is to find a suitable place among the others in society. His misplacement from any little social group like family to bigger ones causes him to be distant from others. It is in his own house that he is introduced to rage, depression and fear for the very first time which leads him to gain a negative attitude towards people. In the early part of the novel, it becomes apparent that Francie's mother is frequently abused both verbally and physically by her husband, Benny, a bitter alcoholic. Francie's mother often considers suicide and is committed for a time to a mental hospital. The same fate that happens for Francie. As a result, his first attempt is to create a protective shield around himself by trying to dissolve with others like Joe and Philip. But no one seems to have a tendency to accept Francie as a friend even his ex-best friend Joe due to his background of mental issues; thus, his dialogue with others cannot be completed in a healthy way. Constant rejection by almost everyone makes it predictable that Francie will have a hard time encountering the complex process of dialogism with his surroundings.

The procedure of building a self happens through interaction which Bakhtin calls dialogism. The cornerstone of Francie's self-construction is the variance between his self and others. It can be argued that his subjectivity is shaped by his sense of otherness. Bakhtin calls a novel a heteroglot discourse presenting social voices (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 127). In such context, Francie is unable to construct a self among others as his surroundings respond him in an unpleasant way and as a result the dialogical self-signification does not happen thoroughly



for him. In the polyphonic context of the novel with variety of people, everyone is violent with Francie and he chooses to protest this situation in his very own way; he chooses violence as a dialogical reaction. With dialogue blocked, he is unable to convey his truth and his utterance is not completed to be answered and as a result, dialogical communication does not happen.

Even though Francie is not welcomed in his society, he never stops seeking dialogism with others. He tries his best to fit among different groups of people and to be loved by them. He continues his search for acceptance to find a cure for his wounded soul by seeking dialogism. The involvement in the process of dialogism makes him feel like a part of his society. This is what makes his narrative story completely opposite of monologism in which no other thought is accepted rather than the main characters. According to [White \(2009\)](#) “Every human being possesses the capacity to resist, confront and make personal meaning out of social exchange” (3). Hence, Francie’s attempt to interact with the people despite the fact that almost everyone hates him, puts him in an unconscious way of self-defining.

To answer the question of identity for Francie who is influenced by all characters around, is an impossible job. Among all the multiple roles that Francie plays the most significant one is the role of the narrator and in forming this narrative he employs language which is the most important feature. His attempt to control language and to create an identity based on it is both doomed to failure. For Francie, language is not an adequate means of bridging the gap between himself and others and creating a dialogic relationship. He uses language with few unsuitable words that never conveys what he really means and blocks the way of dialogue with people. Francie’s move from the real world to a fantasy world and subsequently his comeback from dialogism of self and the other, leaves him as an outcast among others.

In dialogism, the language of a self is not specified to his or her own but according to Bakhtin its nature is intersubjective that “lies between oneself and the other” ([Bakhtin, 1981](#), p. 293). In other words, the self is exchanged through a dialogic process between subjectivities and every subject reflects the other’s existence through a dialogic construction. Briefly, a self is in a constant participation in authoring himself or herself in the vision of the others. Francie’s contrary feelings for the Nugent family is understandable in this regard. He hates their existence and sees them as his one and only enemies but at the same time, he wishes to see himself as one of them. He hurts Phillip Nugent yet he begs for his friendship. Francie tries to create a new identity for himself from the Nugent’s perspective as the symbol of ruling class in order to escape from being the other.

4.3. Polyphony; Creating Context for Dialogism

Bakhtin's two foremost concepts, dialogism and polyphony are sometimes used interchangeably. For Bakhtin dialogism is literally "multi-voicedness in fictional writings" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 279). Dialogism in a novel happens when the author's voice is in relation to fictional characters of that novel. Hence, in a dialogic novel the characters are given the capacity of the independent existences in order to have interaction with one another and with the author. The interaction between the author and the characters is an implicit one though. There exist a variety of fictional consciousnesses available to the author to advance his goals. Through the protagonist's narrative, various narrations are introduced to the readers. According to David Lodge, a dialogic novel is a "novel in which a variety of conflicting ideological positions are given a voice and set in play both between and within individual speaking subjects, without being placed and judged by an authoritative authorial voice" (Lodge, 1990, p. 86). In *The Butcher Boy* when characters exchange information with one another a dialogic voice happens; English dominant voice, priests, margins and many other voices merge to show the decline of the traditional picture of Irish society as an ideal one.

McCabe draws a clear picture of Irish social relations in his text and therefore all the characters' voices stand for his polyphonic voice. To be more specific on existing different social voices in the book it can be claimed that *The Butcher Boy* examines the distinction between Francie, the rural, Irish narrator, haunted by his family and their past, and Mrs. Nugent, the modern, English-Irish antagonist. Bakhtin believes that the fictional protagonist is a thoroughly self-conscious being capable of commenting on himself and on his surroundings (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 50). Francie and Mrs. Nugent are totally aware of each other and such awareness shows McCabe's implied voice within the text. In this regard, the notion of polyphony plays a significant role in carrying out the authorial discourse which for Bakhtin is "defined in relation to its referential object ... or in relation to other discourses within the same context or the same speech" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 185-86). Within the humiliating words of Mrs. Nugent, exists a voice standing for the negative social manner of Irish society towards the margins: "She said she knew the kind of us long before she went to England and she might have known not to let her son anywhere near the likes of [Francie] what else would you expect from a house where the father's never in, lying about in pubs from morning to night, he's no better than a pig" (McCabe, 1993, p. 7).

In such polyphonic text, Francie who is the novel's protagonist brings the authorial polyphonic voice into the plot. "The last thing I heard was Nugent going down the lane and calling back Pigs, sure the whole town knows that!" (McCabe, 1993, p. 7). By judgments like this which are not few in the story, Francie conveys McCabe's authorial polyphonic voice that criticizes the hierarchical structure of neo-colonial Irish society and the look onto the



marginalized strata. To be more definite, Francie's voice is the clear-cut and direct voice representing the implied voice of McCabe. This relationship between two voices is the necessary link in a polyphonic text. Its main duty is to manifest the author's social and cultural ideology through the novel that in here is the Irish traditional lifestyle.

5. Conclusion

The present article investigates the literary theories of Mikhail Bakhtin about the novel and dialogism, applying them on Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy*. To Bakhtin, novel is a kind of super genre that priors all the other genres. The importance of the novel genre is from its capability of accepting diversity of voices and heterogeneity. In this regard, Dostoevsky is the best example of presenting this diversity in his works. In other words, Dostoevsky's novels are perfectly dialogic. Among Bakhtin's theories dialogism and polyphony can be considered as interconnected and interchangeable. In a polyphonic novel all characters, regardless of their majority or minority, have their own independent voice and ideology. Their voices represent their worldviews and discourses. The voices other than the voice of the main character influence on the narration of the story and stand in opposition to each other and to the author's voice. Each character brings his individual language into the novel even if it is in contrast to the language of protagonist or the author. Thus, polyphony can be considered as the necessary basis for dialogism which is the basis of all Bakhtinian theories. The most important application of polyphony in *The Butcher Boy* is to create a way to criticize the corrupted Irish social position. In the text, characters are literary elements to project authors' notions and ideologies dramatically.

The mutual relationship between the self and the other is demonstrated through character's constant encounter with different people. A relation in which they employ a free play of dialogue that is never going to an end. The reader is introduced to a narration of Francie obsessed with living among the others despite being rejected. The others with whom he has a dual feeling for; feeling out of place in social occasions yet being unable to build an identity in isolation. This side of his character that puts him in an unfinalized dialogism with others can be fully studied according to Bakhtinian theories. In the importance of creating dialogue with others, Bakhtin declares that "even living means participation in dialogue" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 293). Francie desperately seeks friendship with Joe and Phillip despite their different lifestyle that puts them in a superior state.

In order to create a dialogical and polyphonic novel, the author introduces various subjective voices within his story. Some of these voices are in line with the narrator's voice such as Annie, Francie's mother and some of them are in total contrast like Mrs. Nugent. The existence of all these different voices

contributes in Francie's process of self-signification which leads to his transformation. The open ending of the novel and the unpredictable fate of Francie give way to the reader to participate in the polyphonic process of meaning-making. After being released from mental hospital, Francie is going through a life which is vague and unpredictable; Francie is in a state that nobody knows whether he is going to be a serial killer or a normal part of society.

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