

# **The Carnival of Difference**

A

New Publication by



Naad Pargaas

Sri Amritsar

---

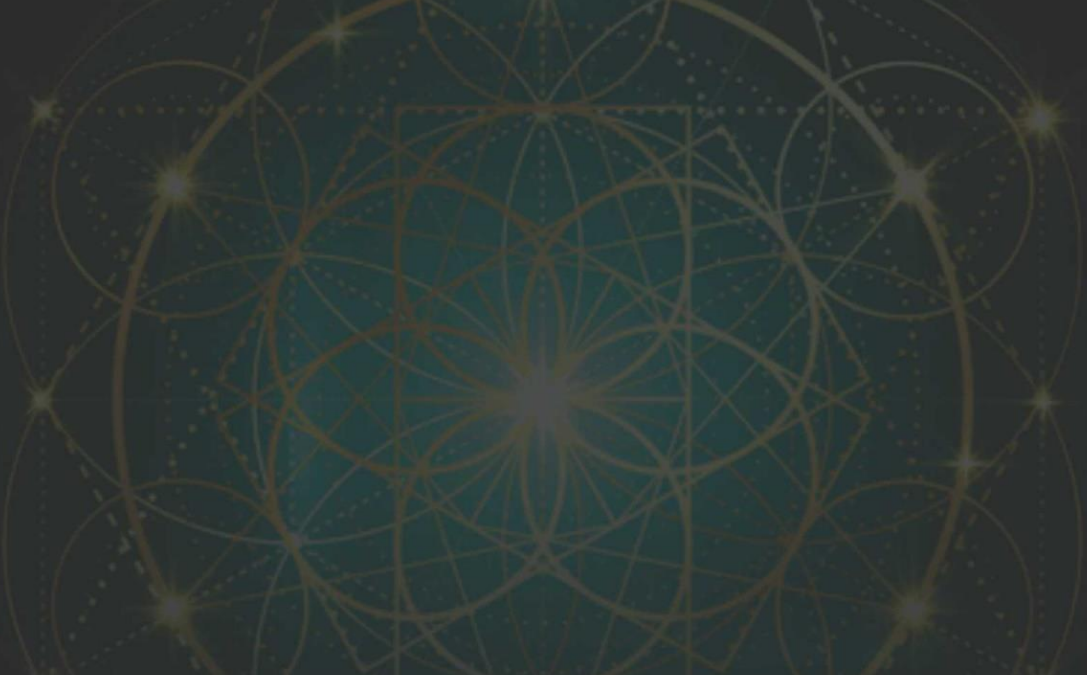
Contact: [naadpargaas1469@gmail.com](mailto:naadpargaas1469@gmail.com)

+91 9872813433

*THE*  
**CARNIVAL**  
*OF*  
**DIFFERENCE**



Deepinderjeet Randhawa



Deepinderjeet Randhawa's study is not "semiotic" in the Saussurian sense, which to her is "linear" based on reading the sign with a single signified, moving one dimensionally. The semiotics that she has developed chiefly from the texts of Dickens and Dostoyevsky, elaborates the sign as the act of "flash metonymies." Through this insightful category she has re-defined the literary sign as intensely dispersing in several directions and multitemporalities. The aesthetic energy and force with which the literary sign for these links, make it a sign of erasure, annulling the original sign; signifier relation and connecting up pluralistically.

Through her theory and practice she has established that both Dickens and Dostoyevsky, especially in their texts: *Great Expectations* and *The Brothers Karamazov*, can be appropriately hermeneuticized if the linear Saussurian semiotics is replaced by a ruptural, multi linking, multitemporal *flash semiotics* of constant erasure referring to several small narratives present in a single moment of history.



**NAAD PARGAAS**  
Sri Amritsar  
Punjab (India) | Michigan (USA)

Literary Criticism



₹ 550/- \$ 20

**THE CARNIVAL OF DIFFERENCE**  
**IMAGINARY AND SEMIOTICS OF DICKENS AND**  
**DOSTOYEVSKY**

**DEEPINDERJEET RANDHAWA**

*Foreword by*

**DR. GURBHAGAT SINGH**



**NAAD PARGAAS**  
SRI AMRITSAR  
Punjab | Michigan

## CONTENTS

<i>Foreword</i>	–Dr. Gurbhagat Singh	ix
<i>Introduction</i>	–Deepinderjeet Randhawa	xiii
<i>Acknowledgement</i>		xvi
• Chapter 1		
<b>Fictive Imaginary: The Carnival of Difference</b>		1
• Chapter 2		
<b>The Historical Genesis of Dickens’ Semiotics</b>		20
• Chapter 3		
<b>The Semiotics of Great Expectations</b>		41
• Chapter 4		
<b>The Historical Genesis of Dostoyevsky’s Semiotics</b>		87
• Chapter 5		
<b>The Semiotics of The Brothers Karamazov</b>		128
• Chapter 6		
<b>A Comparative View</b>		217
• <b>Conclusion</b>		227
<i>Appendix</i>		229
<i>Bibliography</i>		253

## FOREWORD

It is a pleasure to introduce Deepinderjeet Randhawa's work *The Carnival of Difference: imaginary and Semiotics of Dickens and Dostoyevsky*. The work is not just semiotics or literary criticism. It has assimilated contemporary thinkers of postmodern disciplines relevant to the topic, like Derrida, Levinas, Kristeva, Lyotard, Jameson, and some others, but still the work reads like the luminous fiction of a woman passionately engaged in realizing her own creative possibilities. She has altered, redefined, and even unsettled several concepts. With surprising and radical dare devilry, she has successfully produced a few new critical categories. In the highly competitive and loaded critical world, it is not easy to accomplish this kind of, almost impossible, task.

Deepinderjeet Randhawa's study is not "semiotic" in the Saussurian sense, which to her is "linear" based on reading the sign with a single signified, moving one dimensionally. The semiotics that she has developed chiefly from her texts of Dickens and Dostoyevsky, elaborates the sign as the act of "flash metonymies." Through this insightful category she has re-defined the literary sign as intensely dispersing in several directions and multitemporalities. The aesthetic energy and force with which the literary sign for these links, make it a sign of erasure, annulling the original sign; signifier relation and connecting up pluralistically.

Through her theory and practice she has established that both Dickens and Dostoyevsky, especially in their texts: *Great Expectations* and *The Brothers Karamazov*, can be appropriately hermeneuticized if the linear Saussurian semiotics is replaced by a ruptural, multi linking, multitemporal *flash semiotics* of constant erasure referring to several small narratives present in a single moment of history.

The *flash semiotics* that the author constructs and practices, constitutes the fictive text. Her inspiration is both from the heterogeneous postmodern moment of her own multipressured biography and the historical location of Dostoyevsky's multiphrenic Russia on which the novelist was focussing by rending her body to explode and enflame so that he could mark the absence of Slavophilicity that he believed would liberate his people and lead them to the sacred. Whether the semiotics derived from her own biography and from Russia's history can be generalized is a debatable matter, but it definitely brings forth a dynamic and fresh perspective to look at fiction.

The volatile fictive sign of Randhawa's *flash semiotics* is articulated through an Imaginary which is different from the synthesizing Imagination of Coleridge. The Fictive Imaginary, as she elaborates, "disrupts organicity" and is "a decentred play of diverse centres." Since it is ruptural, it is "anti-foundational," and interacts with the "exo-semiotic" structures. Its explosivity undermines all hegemonic ideologies. In the Fictive Imaginary of Randhawa, the author is not absent. To contradistinguish herself from Roland Barthes's notion she asserts that the Imaginary is also shaped by the subject who is positioned and interacting with the post-Symbolic choric, i.e., instinctive energies, that one realizes after encountering the phallic or language. She differs with Julia Kristeva who believes that the "thetic" subject produces a poetic discourse while interacting with the pre-Symbolic choric or the mother's body. Fictive Imaginary is multimediated. Its ruptural intensity, obliterating all hegemonic signifieds and ideologies, is "a rush of hesitated deference." It is a hesitated deference because its heterogeneous elements or centres collide and intermediate but do not synthesize, no centres remain dominant. The intermediative explosivity of the Imaginary is not chaotic or impotent because of its hesitation, it is a positive celebration or "carnival of difference." The notion of carnival that Randhawa takes from Bakhtin, as with him, is Yes-oriented through which the subalterns redeem their life, mutilated and brutally hegemonized by the ruling classes.

Reverberating Kristeva, Lacan and Foucault, the author believes that the signs of Dickens are "decentred," their dialectic

comes “from the pain and joy of being inscribed and of tearing away from this inscription.” It is this duality that lends his Imaginary a leap, displacing the historical to give us the aesthetic. The interaction of the Symbolic and the personal shapes the dialectical sign of Dickens. Affected by the transition from the feudal and capitalist values, it becomes a sign of opposed signifieds. The energy that these signifieds generate she calls “an epiphany of semiotic ambiguity.” Ambiguity to her is not Empsonian, but Kristevan, involving different social and political structures. Because of the semiotic ambiguity, the signs of *Great Expectations* disrupt the linear signified/signifier relationship and become deferral. For that reason they are not “representational” or “flat.” The punctured relationship between the sign and the external/internal reality, produced what she calls, by using a notion of Derrida, “the semiotics of hymenal cut.”

Dickens’ dialectical signs constituted by two opposed signifieds have been extended by Dostoyevsky to “polylectics,” a term that Randhawa insightfully coins to elaborate the specific sign of Dostoyevsky aiming to “reveal” the different social spaces, manipulated by the Symbolic power. Through this polylectical sign, she believes, Dostoyevsky fashions his aesthetics that not only makes a deep incision into the Russian mind under Symbolic repression, but also ruptures into the “frenzied disequibrated energy” of his characters. The disequilibrium that is aesthetic, psychological, philosophical, social and political, makes the Dostoyevskian sign ceaselessly deferral, “forever under erasure.” The massive and continuous deferral reveals Dostoyevsky’s “Slavophile semioticity.”

By suggesting that Dostoyevsky’s Imaginary, narrative and signs are a search for “Slavophile semioticity” she has not only specified Dostoyevsky’s aesthetics but also enlarged the theory of semiotics. In Saussure and Jakobson there are historicist hints. but no explicit idea that semiotics could be culture-specific. Randhawa’s reading of Dostoyevsky’s Slavophilic search leads to think of this possibility. Recent work of Gottdiener in *Postmodern Semiotics* talks of “exo-semiotic structures,” but remains short of developing a theory of culture-specific semiotics.

To interpret Dostoyevsky as pushing himself and his



narrative towards Slavophile semiotics, appropriate to the genius of Russia, not only differentiates the novelist from the European rationalist project but also justifies his presentation of collusive characters in which history, psyche and the different structures of Russia explode to herald a new dawn, a new sign, or better Signifier, illuminated and impassioned by the Russian quest filled with a loving and compassionate Christ.

In her occasionally dazzling pursuit of defining the specific semioticity of Dostoyevsky, Randhawa leaps forward in her discussion of four major novels of Dostoyevsky, other than *The Brothers Karamazov*. Again, by combining Foucault and Saussure, she has developed an advantageous critical category “semiotic episteme” which she relates to Dostoyevsky’s “continuous deferments and forceful significations.” Bedazzled by her own discoveries, she repeats her notion for the benefit of a non-specialist, which may be regarded as imprecision by a specialist, but she compensates for that through her interdisciplinary and luminous narrative that becomes explosive and forceful like the “volatile tensorialities” that she strives to explain in her redundancy. The passion to push her notions to the dead end also makes her appear, sometimes, monistic, reducing all to the same. But in view of her promising work one can hope that in the near future she will systematically theorize *culture-specific semiotics of flash erasure*, and further explore the particularity of Dostoyevsky’s “semiotic episteme” that still remains too general to reveal the ontologies of the major novels she has discussed.

**Gurbhagat Singh**

## CHAPTER 1

# FICTIVE IMAGINARY: THE CARNIVAL OF DIFFERENCE

The intention of this chapter is to theorize the complex structure of Fictive Imaginary as a carnival of difference. This difference has been elaborated in relation to the authorial subject, mediations of various levels and the articulation through appropriate semiotics. The explanation of this category will serve as an introduction to the semiotics of Dickens and Dostoyevsky discussed in the subsequent chapters.

It is relevant here to first discuss the distinction between Fictive Imaginary and the imagination, as theorized by the Romantics. The imagination cannot be separated from the rationalist project and mimesis. M.H. Abrams, while discussing the poetic ideas of Coleridge and Wordsworth, elaborates the imagination as the synthetic power which reconciles and blends “opposite or discordant qualities” (Abrams, 1971:118). The imagination when understood as a synthetic product of resolving discordant qualities of the mind and the senses is grounded in the principle of unity and sameness. Unification of differences implies that diverse qualities are assimilated into a synthesis of opposites. It reduces all diversity to a rationalistic denominator or to a Grand Narrative. To this resolving faculty Coleridge gives the name of Imagination. The imagination in his sense is a mimesis of the creative principle underlying the universe. The imagination is the exercising power of “the sum or I AM.” Mimesis of natural feelings or language implies sameness that does not give us the differential structures that are operative in the social and cultural heterogeneity. The imagination understood as an assimilative energy is totalitive

and representational. Fictive Imaginary is anti-representational as it does not strive to unify the rational and the passionate by bringing these contraries under Nature or Self. Whereas the imagination is rooted in the creative process of an organically-interrelated universe, Fictive Imaginary disrupts the organicity by breaking free from the proposition of uniform passions, feelings and language. Uniformity is displaced by heterogeneity in Fictive Imaginary. While the Enlightenment had given a totalitive I which the mimetic theory translates into *eidos* or *telos*, Fictive Imaginary does not provide any such centre; it is for a decentred play of diverse structures. To fully understand the process of Fictive Imaginary we need to understand the positionality of the subject who generates Fictive Imaginary.

### **Authorial Subject: Positionality**

The position of the authorial subject has been an issue of debate ever since Roland Barthes proclaimed the death of the author. Even Derrida rules out any metaphysical or authorial presence by saying that it is the play of the text which produces dissemination of meaning.

To free a creative work from its author means that all cultural and biographical factors that go into the making of a text are erased, the text is autotelic, which it is not. The authorial subject whose imaginary generates a fictive text is not to be seen as a sign of direct presence but as a trace that is dispersed in the narrational space. The authorial overload is distributed to various ambiguous structures through the Imaginary. Fictive Imaginary cannot be completely free from the creative subject's positionality, it carries a trace of the subject's position. Julia Kristeva has clearly shown how the interaction of the subject's Symbolic and the semiotic lead to a poetic language. However, the interaction is not linear, it needs to be elaborated, beginning with Lacan's Imaginary. The child, according to Lacan revels in the self-identificatory I in the mirror stage. The specularity of the ideal I is shattered when it is mediated by language and cultural forms. The child's illusion of a Gestalt is broken with a splintered I that has come into contact with the Other. This Other is the Symbolic. The pre-Symbolic stage is understood by Julia Kristeva as semiotic

**THE SEMIOTICS OF *GREAT EXPECTATIONS***

In *Great Expectations* Dickens probes the human problematic mainly concentrated on one individual in a transitional society, passing through a period of inconsistencies, doubts, discoveries, and socio-economic conflicts. The individual is positioned in the multipressures of capitalist use values and feudal power manipulations. The semiotics of the novel is mediated by these pressures that disrupt the representational signs produced in deferment. This tension problematizes the psyche and existence of the characters. Dickens situates the individual in the material conditions and power relations of the world, revealing his/her inner conflicts. It is in the gap between materiality and the Post-Thetic (Kristeva) semiotic that Dickens shapes his aesthetic meaning. Sometimes he seems to be pushing his characters as signs to a point of the Heideggerian kind of “abyss” to reveal their unauthenticity in which their original signifieds have been obliterated.

*Great Expectations* was published in the year 1861. England during this time was seized by rapid changes. Feudal system was giving in to the capitalist value system in the wake of growing industrialization. Scientific discoveries initiated the conflict between blind faith in Christian dogma and logical deduction. The transitional value system was simultaneously ripe with economic crisis and political instability. England was in a grip of tensions. Dickens, thus, had a rich background to breathe in and produce his signs. Dickens' own personal life had the pain of deprivation and loneliness for his Imaginary to rupture into a dialectical sign system. He makes human beings his prime concern in the novel. He structures his sign in multiple conflicts and contextual

## THE HISTORICAL GENESIS OF DOSTOYEVSKY'S SEMIOTICS

It is the “plurality of consciousness” in the Bakhtinian sense that specifies the semiotics of Dostoyevsky’s works, fermented in highly polarized structures of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian society. To fully appreciate the multidimensionality of Dostoyevsky’s signs it is relevant to trace the socio-economic and exo-semiotic structures and the conditions of his historical epoch. Nineteenth century Russia went through several transitions; from agriculture to industry and from the orthodox Christianity to scientific knowledge. The transitional period was marked by a multiplicity of State territorializations, reforms, the development of radical and revolutionary ideas. These changes directly or indirectly shaped the Imaginary of Dostoyevsky and the signs of his novels.

The nineteenth century carrying an overload of conflicts and contradictions from the previous century reached an explosive stage at the time of Dostoyevsky’s birth in 1821. Besides these accumulating conflicts of his age, Dostoyevsky’s over conditioned problematic existence was also responsible for shaping the complex semiotic network of his novels. Dostoyevsky’s work, however, is not to be understood as a representation of the upheavals of the Russian society. Although, historical over determination mediates the signs of Dostoyevsky, still these signs under internal pressures and interaction simultaneously float a semioticity of their own that is anti-foundational. This chapter is a study of the diverse structures which had triggered his Imaginary to shape his signs in a highly volatile narrative space. The chapter has been divided into three sections: (i) Dostoyevsky’s world: Its Polylectics (ii) Logonomics (iii) Biographical Factors.

## CHAPTER 5

### **THE SEMIOTICS OF *THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV***

The complexity of Dostoyevsky's semiotics is interlinked with the transitional conflicts of the Russian society in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Russia, during this period was surcharged with external and internal pressures. The masses reeled under the feudal and imperial repression that gradually found outlets in violent outbursts, revolt and ideological movements. It was a period of both instability and creativity. While religion was locked in conflict with rationalism, progressive ideas were blunted against orthodox rigidity. Capitalism on its advent further eroded the Russian culture under European influences. Oppression intensified the urge for new ideological alternatives. Russia was not only politically and economically deprived, it also faced culture disintegration against Eurocentric infiltrations.

Dostoyevsky's semiotics was conditioned by these multiple conflicts. *The Brothers Karamazov* was published in 1877. Its signs are positioned in the multilectics of the "Symbolic" (in Kristeva's sense) world. The tensions of this world are transferred to the play between the signifier and the signified in the text. Dostoyevsky extends the Dickensian dialectical semiotics to the multilectical play of signs. His characters are structured amidst multiple tensions. Each sign is invested with several opposing intensities/signifieds which dismantle the highly pressurized consciousness of his characters. Unlike Dickens, Dostoyevsky mirrors the polarities of his characters in each other to make his semiotics an overloaded play of energies. Dickens made a parallel study of Estella, Pip,

Joe, Magwitch on one plane, and of Jaggers and Miss